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TITLE

The Development of Anglican Evangelicalism in London
1736-1836 with Special Reference to
the Revd. John Newton.

M Phil Thesis

presented to the Department of Religious Studies, The Open
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by

Peter Norman Lambert Pytches, BD, MA, PhD.

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ABSTRACT

The thesis begins with a statement of the terms of reference and definition of terms. Consideration is given to the social, cultural, philosophical and religious attitudes and influences of the late 17th and early 18th centuries, particularly in relation to London and the Established Church. Attention is paid to the antecedents and precursors of London Evangelicalism.

The influence, in London, of George Whitefield and John Wesley is evaluated, together with that of the Countess of Huntingdon and William Romaine. Early difficulties for Evangelicals in obtaining useful spheres of influence and the importance of lectureships, proprietary chapels, and patronage are highlighted. Specific reference to a few London Evangelicals is made and the influence of evangelical literature mentioned. The continuing Predestinarian controversy is observed.

The appointment of John Newton to his incumbency at Woolnoth in 1779, it is argued, marked a decisive stage in the development of London Evangelicalism. Also prominent in this development were Thomas Scott, Josiah Pratt, Basil Wood, Henry Foster and William

Goode and Hannah More (through her writings and London contacts). Special attention is paid to Newton and the Eclectic Society, and the more moderate Calvinism which developed. William Wilberforce and the Clapham Sect, his *Practical View*, theological orientation, and humanitarian concern, are explored. Also Daniel Wilson (Sr) and the Islington Conference are evaluated. The London influence of Charles Simeon is noted. Special attention is paid to the founding of the Religious Tract Society, Church Missionary Society, British and Foreign Bible Society and Church Pastoral Aid Society, the contributions of laity, the May Meetings and the Exeter Hall.

The changing outlooks of Evangelical publications is noted and the Millenarian controversy reviewed. Conflicting opinions of the strength and impact of London Evangelicalism are assessed and the calibre of the clergy evaluated.

The thesis closes with a summary and the conclusions reached.

Acknowledgements

Some acknowledgement, however inadequate, of encouragement given and help received is appropriate. First, special thanks are due to the following libraries and institutions for their careful attention and unfailing assistance: Cambridge University Library, Bodleian Library, British Library, Guildhall Library, Lambeth Palace Library and Central Library of the London Borough of Enfield. I am also grateful to the Principals and Librarians of Ridley Hall, Cambridge, and Oak Hill College, London, for kindly granting access to their libraries.

I am deeply indebted to Professor John Wolffe, my supervisor, for his constant encouragement, unfailing patience and sensitive guidance. Needless to say, the deficiencies and errors which remain are entirely mine.

Finally, I thank my wife, Beryl, who might reasonably have expected fewer encroachments on our life in retirement, who has given loving support and strong inducement to persevere. I also thank my son, Paul, for much help in improving my computer skills.

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ABBREVIATIONS

SOURCE LOCATIONS

- BL Bodleian Library, Oxford.
- C&NM Cowper and Newton Museum, Olney.
- CUL Cambridge University Library.
- GL Guildhall Library, London.
- LPL Lambeth Palace Library, London.
- RHL Ridley Hall Library, Cambridge.

WORKS OF REFERENCE

- DBI *Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation*, Coggins, RJ and Houlden, JL (eds) (1990).
- DEB *Blackwell Dictionary of Evangelical Biography*, Lewis, DM, (ed.) (Oxford, 1995).
- DECH *Dictionary of English Church History*, Ollard, SL and Crosse, G, (eds) (London, 1948).
- DNB *Dictionary of National Biography* (Compact Edition), Williams, E, (ed.) (Oxford, 1975).
- EB *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Ashmore, HS (ed.), (London, 1963).
- EDT *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, Elwell, WA, (ed.) (Basingstoke, 1985).
- HTCBH *The History Today Companion to British History*, Gardiner, J, and Wenborn, N, (eds) (Leicester, 1988).
- NDCT *A Dictionary of Christian Theology*, Richardson, A, and Bowden, J, (eds) (London, 1983).
- NDT *New Dictionary of Theology*, Ferguson, FB and Wright, DF, (eds) (Leicester, 1988).
- NIDCC *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church*, Douglas, JD, (ed) (Grand Rapids, 1978).

- OC *An Outline of Christianity*, Peake, AS and Parsons, AG, (eds)
(n.d.).
- OCBH *The Oxford Companion to British History*, Cannon, J, (ed.)
(Oxford, 1997).
- ODCC *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, Cross, FL
and Livingstone, EA, (eds) (Oxford, 1997).
- ODNB *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004).
- PD *A Protestant Dictionary*, Wright, CHH and Neill, C, (eds)
(1904).

THESIS

1. TERMS OF REFERENCE AND DEFINITIONS

The title of this thesis immediately raises two matters requiring clarification. First, what is meant by 'Anglican Evangelicalism' in relation to the period under review? Second, in what sense is the term 'London' to be understood? The words 'Anglican' and 'Evangelicalism' are both used in a variety of ways today, some of which would have been unintelligible in this period. Again, London is not only a vastly greater geographical area today but, even in the 18th and 19th centuries, the term 'London' conveyed different meanings.

'Anglican Evangelicalism'

It is usually, and correctly, understood that Methodism played an integral part in what has come to be known as 'the evangelical revival' of the 18th and 19th centuries. As is well known, John Wesley (1703-1791) and George Whitefield (1714-1770) were the leaders of the so-called

Methodist movement. Both were ordained as ministers of the Church of England and neither ever renounced his Anglican orders. The term 'Methodists' had already been applied derisively to Charles Wesley (1707-1788) and his group of serious and zealous fellow Christian students at Oxford, also known as the Holy Club. Charles himself ascribed this to the group's 'strict conformity to the method of study prescribed by the statutes of the university.'¹ However, it was not until after John Wesley's Aldersgate Street experience of 1738, after which he said 'I felt my heart strangely warmed', that what came to be called the Methodist movement became widely known, through the preaching of John Wesley and Whitefield. However the 'Methodism' of this movement was very different from that of the Oxford Holy Club.

At this stage adherents of the Methodist movement regarded themselves very much continuing as members of the Church of England. It is worth noting that the Evangelical cleric Thomas Scott (1747-1821) at one stage designated 'the evangelical system' as Methodism.² However, we note

¹ See HB Workman, 'The Story of Methodism' in OC (Please see list of abbreviations in Bibliography), iii, 229.

² AC Downer, *Thomas Scott* (1909), 41.

that in 1790 the Revd John Newton described the word 'Methodist' as 'so vague and indeterminate' that he declined to answer directly a question in Bishop Porteous's Articles of Enquiry.³ There was, of course, even in those early days, opposition on the part of many clergy. In the main this was due to the rather loose submission of Methodists to the discipline of the Established Church. However, most Methodists continued to be regular in their attendance at the Lord's Supper at their parish churches. Moreover, Methodist Preaching Houses were not normally used in Church hours.⁴ The original intention was that preachers should be clergy of the Church of England but in fact few were. As Methodist 'societies' increased in number, so more lay preachers were used. In 1784 the Wesleyan Connexion was fully established in law and in the same year a Deed of Declaration naming one hundred preachers as constituting the 'People called Methodists, with provisions for its maintenance', was lodged.⁵ In that same year Wesley ordained superintendents and elders for America, a step which was to prove decisive in leading to the eventual breach with the Established Church.

³ Fulham Papers, LPL, Porteus 28/53 - 1790.

⁴ See GG Cragg, *Grimshaw of Haworth*, (1947), 47, 48.

⁵ AS Wood, 'Methodist Churches', NDCC, 653.

'On Wesley's death in 1791 the future relations of Methodism with the C. of E. were a matter of dispute, but the "Plan of Pacification" adopted by the Conference of 1795 eventually led to the administration of the sacraments in all Methodist chapels and the declaration that the admission of a preacher to "full connexion with the Conference" conferred ministerial rights without any form of ordination.'⁶ This, of course, meant Methodism was now in effect a separate denomination in Britain. Although Wesley himself had always wished the Movement to remain within the Church of England it was, ironically, his own considerable organisational powers which contributed to an increasingly independent system growing up. He maintained that the Church of England 'with all her blemishes, was nearer the Scriptural plan than any other church in Europe.' He urged: 'Be Church of England men still; do not cast away the peculiar glory which God hath put upon you.' And 'If ever the Methodists leave the church, I must leave them.'⁷

It is sometimes stated that the Methodist and Evangelical movements 'were in origin one', thus: 'the modern Evangelical party derived its origin from the Methodists who remained within the pale of the historic

⁶ 'Methodist Churches', ODCC, 1078.

⁷ See HDM Spence, *The Church of England: A History for the People*, 1898, iv, 248, 261.

Church'.⁸ This also seems to be implied by SL Ollard's statement that the term Evangelical became the description of 'a school of thought in the English Church [which] began after the Methodist Revival of the 18th century.'⁹ It is possible, of course, to maintain that both movements were inspired by the same Spirit and perfectly true that some Evangelicals came to have close links with the early Methodists – for example, William Grimshaw (1708-1763), John Berridge (1716-1793), and John Fletcher (1729-1785) whom Wesley had hoped would succeed him as leader. It is also possible to hold that early Wesleyan Methodism was a major spiritual influence permeating both the Established Church and the nation. It is also the case that even Evangelicals who stood aloof from the early Methodists were sometimes given the sobriquet 'Methodist'. However, it is now generally accepted that, notwithstanding a common spiritual impulse, there were two distinct but parallel revival movements – Methodist (or Wesleyans as they were sometimes described) and Evangelical – from the start.

Thus, John Kent, writing of the 1730s, clearly distinguishes between the Wesleyans and 'the Moravians, the evangelical Anglicans, [and] the

⁸ MW Patterson, *A History of the Church of England* (1909), 390, 391.

⁹ 'CHURCH, High, Low, Broad', DECH, 116.

Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion'.¹⁰ JH Overton is also clear that it would be a great mistake to confound 'Methodism' (by which he means Wesleyanism) and Evangelicalism, notwithstanding certain similarities and interactions.¹¹

Turning to the term 'evangelical', John Wolffe has reminded us that the word has a complex history and 'it must be clearly distinguished from the related but very different word "evangelistic".' Wolffe himself uses 'evangelical' 'to denote those movements in the Protestant churches that derived their original inspiration from the upsurge of revivalistic movements that broke out across the north Atlantic world in the 1730s.'¹² For our purposes we shall adopt the fourfold formulation of DW Bebbington in his identification of the central characteristics of evangelicalism. Thus: 'There is ... a common core that has remained remarkably constant down the centuries. Conversionism, activism, biblicism and crucicentrism form the defining attributes of Evangelical religion.'¹³ Significantly, this formulation was adopted by DM Lewis in

¹⁰ J Kent, *Wesley and the Wesleyans*, (Cambridge, 2002), 79.

¹¹ See JH Overton, in CJ Abbey and JH Overton (eds), *The English Church in the Eighteenth Century* (1867), 366.

¹² J Wolffe (ed.), *Evangelical Faith and Public Zeal: Evangelicals and Society in Britain 1780-1980* (1995), 4.

¹³ DW Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain* (1989), 4. See also 5-17.

editing his Dictionary ¹⁴ and followed by GM Ditchfield, although Ditchfield gives priority to biblicism and crucicentrism because they enshrined the beliefs themselves as distinct from 'the ways in which those beliefs were experienced and communicated.'¹⁵ In this thesis 'Evangelical' with the capitalized 'E' will be used to denote those members of the Church of England holding the views and outlook delineated by DW Bebbington. Those evangelicals of other persuasions will be denoted by the lower case 'e'. This denotation has also been used by, among others, E Jay. ¹⁶

¹⁴ *Dictionary of Evangelical Biography* (Oxford, 1995).

¹⁵ GM Ditchfield, *The Evangelical Revival* (1998), 26.

¹⁶ E Jay, *The Religion of the Heart* (Oxford, 1979), 16, 17.

'London'

Bishop JC Ryle, in 1869, wrote 'The celebrated lawyer, Blackstone, had the curiosity early in the reign of George III [1760-1820], to go from church to church and hear every clergyman of note in London. He says he did not hear a single discourse which had more Christianity in it than the writings of Cicero, and it would have been impossible for him to discover whether the preacher were a follower of Confucius, or of Mahomet, or of Christ.'¹⁷ The relevance of Blackstone's reported statement for this dissertation depends on what he meant by the term 'London'. Hence the importance of clarifying its use. Thus, for example, was Blackstone alluding to what we would now call The City (which today is referred to as 'The Square Mile'), the Diocese of London as it then existed, or to the metropolis in some wider sense?

It will become clear that to confine our study to The City (with its hundred or so churches) would restrict the usefulness of our research. Similarly, a study of Evangelicalism in the Diocese of London (as it then was)¹⁸ would,

¹⁷ *The Christian Leaders of the Last Century* (1869), 15.

¹⁸ Viviane Barrie notes: 'The diocese of London included some 2000 beneficed clergy between 1714 and 1800' ('The Church of England in the diocese of London in the eighteenth century' in J Gregory, and JS Chamberlain, (eds), *The National Church in Local Perspective* (Woodbridge, 2003), 56).

necessarily, fail to convey a meaningful picture to a modern reader. The diocese of London did not in 1736 extend south of the river Thames and it was not until 1845 that 'the diocese was diminished by its territory in Herts and all Essex [except for nine suburban parishes]'¹⁹ The potential for confusion becomes further apparent when we read: 'In 1756, when Whitefield founded the Chapel [Tottenham Court Chapel], what is now a crowded business centre was then open fields *on the outskirts of London*.'²⁰

We shall use the term 'London' to refer to London and its environs. By so doing we shall avoid, on the one hand, the too restrictive sense conveyed by 'The City' and, on the other, the too diffuse and misleading sense conveyed today by 'The Diocese'. When considering influences affecting London Evangelicalism it would be absurd to exclude everything south of the Thames. Although, geographically, it may be accurate to say of Clapham that it was not until the 1870s that it 'was daily becoming more a part of London',²¹ yet, because of its proximity to London and the involvement of certain Clapham Evangelicals in the City and Parliament, its impact on London Evangelicalism was considerable.

¹⁹ 'London, See of,' in DECH, 348.

²⁰ AD Belden, *George Whitefield – The Awakener* (1953), 200. (Our italics).

²¹ S Inwood, *A History of London* (1998), 585.

It is generally accepted that a significant religious movement took place in the 18th and 19th centuries. We shall also note certain non-resident individuals who exercised significant influence on the London Evangelical scene. It is further acknowledged that in England this spiritual awakening, or evangelical revival as it is more usually called, had links with other evangelical movements outside England in its early days. It may not be possible to measure precisely the extent of the influences of, for example, the Welsh evangelical revival, Continental pietism or American evangelicalism on the English scene but it is inconceivable that these movements would not have impinged to some degree.

Similarly, this thesis being concerned with the rise of Anglican Evangelicalism in London, it would be foolish to imagine that London Evangelicals owed nothing to the spiritual awakenings in other parts of England, for example, in Yorkshire or Cornwall. One particular instance would be the powerful influence of Henry Venn (Vicar of Huddersfield 1759-1771) notably through the publication of his evangelical classic *The Complete Duty of Man* (1763) and his leadership in Yorkshire of 'The Elland Clerical Society' (established 1767). Venn both started and ended his career in Clapham. We know that John Newton 'found encouragement in his sense

of vocation among his Yorkshire friends'²² and corresponded with a group of Yorkshire women from 1760-1769.²³ Isaac Milner (1750-1820), who was president of Queens' College, Cambridge from 1788 and Dean of Carlisle from 1799, was another prominent Evangelical who was 'a keen letter-writer and had wide correspondence. He was a lifelong friend of William Wilberforce'²⁴ and must have been a pillar of strength to an Evangelicalism with few ecclesiastical dignitaries. Most famously of all, the influence of Charles Simeon (1759-1836), who lived at Cambridge during his entire ministry, had a ripple effect throughout the country.

1836 will form the *terminus ad quem* of this study. In the eyes of some, it was about this time in the 19th century that the strength of Evangelicalism in Britain and its influence began to wane. However, without pre-judging this particular issue, 1836 marks the founding of the Church Pastoral Aid Society and was also the year of the death of Charles Simeon, thus ending a definable era of Evangelicalism. William Wilberforce and Hannah More had both died in 1833.

²² DB Hindmarsh, *John Newton and the English Evangelical Tradition* (Cambridge, 2001), 86.

²³ Hindmarsh, loc. cit.

²⁴ See AF Munden, 'Milner, Isaac' in DEB, ii, 775.

As to the structure and methodology of this study, we shall have regard to the matrix, viewed historically, from which London Evangelicalism emerged by a consideration of antecedents and precursors. The period will be viewed in three distinct phases. Of necessity, the dates chosen are somewhat arbitrary and, inevitably, there is over-lapping of some influences, as well as observable continuities, from one phase to the next. However, **1736-1779** will be viewed as the period of the **origins and birth of Anglican Evangelicalism in London**, with special reference to John Wesley, George Whitefield, Selina, Countess of Huntingdon and William Romaine. Particular attention will be paid to the problems due to the lack of Evangelical freehold incumbencies in London and how these were partially ameliorated by means of lectureships and proprietary chapels. **1780-1813** will be treated as the period of **consolidation and development** with special reference to John Newton's London ministry when Rector of St Mary Woolnoth until his death in 1807. This also was the period of Thomas Scott (Chaplain of the Lock Hospital 1785-1803), Josiah Pratt, Richard Cecil, other early Evangelical London chaplains and lecturers, and importantly, the Eclectic Society (1783-c.1814). It also included the most significant phase of the Clapham Group (from 1793 until John Venn died in 1813), with its high profile lay influence and leadership, and significant shift of Evangelical direction. The

contributions of Venn, William Wilberforce, John Thornton, Hannah More and Charles Simeon will be reviewed and the beginnings of Evangelical net-working discerned. The significance of the formation of major Evangelical societies - Religious Tract Society (1799), the Church Missionary Society (1799), the British and Foreign Bible Society (1804) - and the abolition of the Slave Trade (1807) for London will become apparent. **1814-1836** will be examined as the period of **expansion and acceptance of Evangelicalism in London**. The continuing influences of Simeon, Wilberforce and More, together with the ministries of E Bickersteth, and both Daniel Wilsons at St Mary, Islington (1824f and 1832f respectively), the Islington Conference (1832f), the May meetings, the opening of the Exeter Hall (c.1830) and the founding of the Church Pastoral Aid Society (1836) will all receive attention, as also will private patronage, the purchase of advowsons and Evangelical literature. The emergence of the millennarian controversy and its impact on Evangelicalism will also be examined.

2. ANTECEDENTS AND PRECURSORS

The terms 'antecedents' and 'precursors', as employed in this thesis, are not used synonymously. By 'antecedents' we mean those impulses, usually with tendencies to dissatisfaction, distress, even despair, which existed before the rise of Evangelicalism and which, directly or indirectly, stirred desires for, and openness to, new possibilities of spiritual experience. By 'precursors' we mean those movements or moods which contained certain elements, or had affinities, which tended to contribute positively to the emergence of London Evangelicalism. Thus, whilst not all antecedents could be said to adumbrate the later Evangelicalism, precursors could foreshadow certain aspects of Evangelicalism and, indeed, might even be regarded as incipient Evangelicalism. Hence, 'antecedents' could not, *per se*, facilitate Evangelical revival; but they could and did have some kind of catalytic effect in initiating revival.

As long ago as 1879 WE Gladstone recognised that the Evangelical Revival was 'the result of the confluence of many tributaries'.¹ This view

¹ WE Gladstone, *Gleanings from Past Years* (1879), vii, 205.

has since received general endorsement from church historians, thus John Walsh avers that 'The Revival, taken as a whole, can be traced back to no single source.'² He is firmly of the opinion: 'It must be described against the background of contemporary social structure and economic organisation.'³

Antecedents

Perceived Threats to Protestantism

Some reference must be made to what was seen as a persistent Catholic threat. The Jacobites were those who remained loyal to the Stuart dynasty in exile. Most of their supporters were protestants, and a great many were non-jurors,⁴ who certainly did not wish for catholicism to be restored. Others had adopted 'Sentimental Jacobitism ... not necessarily coupled with any desire to unseat the current occupant of the throne.'⁵ However,

² J Walsh, 'Origins of the Evangelical Revival' in GV Bennett and J Walsh, (eds), *Essays in Modern Church History* (Oxford, 1966), 135.

³ Ibid., 133.

⁴ See Clyde Jones, 'Jacobitism' in OCBH, 524.

⁵ 'Jacobites' in J Gardiner and N Wenborn (eds), *History Today Companion to British History* (1995), 429.

there was a strong popular belief not only that a threat to Protestantism and the Protestant settlement existed, but that an attempt to overthrow the Hanoverian succession might be made by an armed invasion with foreign assistance. As James II, his son and grandsons were Catholics who had refused to convert to Protestantism, the threat of invasion from France was viewed very seriously. This threat was not finally removed until 1746 when the Jacobites were totally routed at Culloden. Such political instability and fear is likely to have stimulated a social and religious environment in which evangelical religion could prosper.

Enlightenment Thinking

Although classically applied to the later 18th century, the Enlightenment is sometimes dated from the late 17th century. Some historians have indeed questioned whether it is useful to talk about an 'English Enlightenment'.⁶ In many ways it was a continuation of the scientific spirit of the previous age, particularly of the thought of R Descartes, J Locke, and I Newton. The intention was to disseminate and generate their

⁶ See HTC BH, 286.

spirit and to use the scientific method to serve their humanitarian ideals.⁷

David Pailin identifies four fundamental notions in its orientation: 'A commitment to reason as the proper tool and final authority for determining issues'; 'Stress on nature and the appeal to what is natural'; 'A widespread acceptance of an idea'; and 'Rejection of the authority of tradition.' He also observes: 'The Enlightenment criticism of the authority of tradition led to increasing secularization in attitudes and ideas.'⁸

Whatever may be the precise relation between French and English Enlightenment, there are undoubtedly certain features of Enlightenment thinking to be found in the English culture of the 18th century.

It has sometimes been assumed that Enlightenment thinking was inimical to Evangelicalism. This is not necessarily so. D Bebbington holds that the evangelical movement began 'in the cultural mood impinging on the Protestant tradition' and claims: adds 'Contrary to the common view, Evangelicalism was allied with the Enlightenment.'⁹ In 1993 Bebbington discussed the possibility that 'Enlightenment thought may have been as good a medium for vital Christianity as it was for more secularizing tendencies; and the Evangelical revival may have shared the characteristic

⁷ See 'Enlightenment, the' in ODCC, 546, 547.

⁸ D Pailin, 'Enlightenment' in NDCT, 179, 180.

⁹ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, 19. See also 50-69.

worldview of progressive eighteenth-century opinion to a far greater extent than has normally been supposed.'¹⁰ Again, he writes elsewhere: 'For Methodists, as for Evangelical Calvinists, their faith was moulded by the Enlightenment.'¹¹ Indeed, he cites John Wesley himself as an Enlightenment thinker who held attitudes typical of the age of reason and claims he was an empiricist who believed in the investigation of religious experience. 'His method conformed to Newtonian norms, for it was strictly scientific.' John Wolffe, too, can speak of 'those evangelicals [of the mid-nineteenth century] whose frame of mind was still shaped by the legacy of the Enlightenment'.¹² This certainly suggests the enlightenment had a strong influence on Evangelicals.

It is clear that whilst some have spoken of 'the rationalist, humanist "Enlightenment" of the eighteenth century' as being a 'Weltanschauung of major significance'¹³ others have seen it as a hugely variegated process in Britain¹⁴ and by no means synonymous with rationalism, of which the

¹⁰ Bebbington, 'Revival and Enlightenment in Eighteenth-century England' in EL Blumhofer and Randall Balmer (eds), *Modern Christian Revivals* (Chicago, 1993), 18.

¹¹ Bebbington, *Holiness in the Nineteenth Century* (Carlisle, 2000), 57.

¹² J Wolffe (ed.), 'Introduction' in *Evangelical Faith and Public Zeal: Evangelicals and Society in Modern Britain* (1989), 19. Also 59, 60.

¹³ See E Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution* (1996), 20, 234.

¹⁴ See R Porter, *Enlightenment Britain and the Creation of the Modern World* (2000).

dominant conviction was that proper reasoning could lead to true knowledge and, ultimately, to felicity.¹⁵

Deism

Historically, the description Deism designates a mainly British movement, which thrived in the latter part of the seventeenth and through the eighteenth century. 'Deism' now generally refers to a belief in the existence of a supreme being who is regarded as the ultimate source of reality and ground of value. Such a being, it is held, does not intervene in natural and historical processes by means of particular providence, revelations and salvific acts.¹⁶ It was never an organized movement and it embraced a variety of positions, sometimes mutually conflicting – nevertheless, its influence on religious thought was great.

This general religious attitude became more militant through the writings of John Toland, the third earl of Shaftesbury, Matthew Tindal and others. The intention of these deists was to seek a sober natural religion without many of the basic tenets of Christianity. In its popular expression deism

¹⁵ See D Harris, 'Enlightenment' in EB (1963), viii, 599.

¹⁶ See D Pailin, 'Deism' in DCT, 148.

conceived God to be a gentle, loving, and benevolent being, who intended that mankind behave in a kind and tolerant fashion.¹⁷ However, we should note Walsh's contention: 'it is more easy to interpret the Revival as a reaction from rationalism in general – particularly in its clearly Christian forms – than to connect it specifically with the Deistic movement.'¹⁸

Scepticism

The term 'scepticism', when used in philosophical contexts, is usually associated with the Scottish philosopher David Hume (1711-1776). Hume attacked both Deism and orthodox Christianity. He worked from the premise that all of one's knowledge is the product of experience, for human reason cannot attain sure knowledge of how things really are.¹⁹ Put in its simplest terms, Hume maintained absolute certainty or knowledge cannot be attained. With this strong notion of doubt, it is easy to see how for some this could lead to pessimism and insecurity.

¹⁷ See MH MacDonald, 'Deism' in EDT, 304, 305.

¹⁸ Walsh, op. cit., 148.

¹⁹ See DA Rausch, 'Hume, David' in EDT, 536.

The Perceived Materialism and Moral Decadence of London

The social squalor and moral decadence of the metropolis have received much attention. There is no doubt that excessive drinking was a major cause of many of the problems of the day. Asa Briggs has reminded us that William Maitland estimated there were 8,695 'dram' shops and nearly 6,000 alehouses in London.²⁰ and Roy Porter has drawn attention to the state of the sexual mores in the early 18th century: 'London teemed with brothels and other pleasure domes And had in excess of 10,000 prostitutes openly plying their trade.'²¹ Most recently AN Wilson has made reference to 'the moral stench of the capital city' and to 'a society whose values were utterly materialistic and selfish.'²² Dorothy George referred to 'the most brutalizing and demoralizing conditions' existing 1720-1751, but attributes these mainly to 'the orgy of spirit-drinking' of the time. What emerges from these portrayals is the degree of insobriety and licentiousness which existed and their endemicity, indicating the dominant behavioural ethos.²³

²⁰ Asa Briggs, *A Social History of England* (1994), 200.

²¹ Porter, *English Society in the Eighteenth Century* (1990), 264.

²² AN Wilson, *London, A Short History* (2004), 5, 47.

²³ See D Marshall, *Eighteenth Century England* (1974), 486. This emphasis has, however, been questioned by some scholars. Inwood questions her account of the 'gin mania' of the 1720s-1740s, claiming: 'the partisan arguments of a group of evangelical magistrates have passed into the historical record and are repeated by TS Ashton, Phyllis Deane and George Rude. Only Peter Clark has subjected their claims to detailed critical analysis.' Inwood, *A History of London* (1998), 277.

Dorothy Marshall has drawn attention to the conditions which made it difficult for the mass of the people to live by any strict moral code. Overcrowding contributed to every kind of sexual laxity. Extreme poverty resulted in theft and bullying being seen as the only alternatives to starvation. These things, together with ill-health, monotonous food and over-long hours of work, 'often found compensation in drunkenness, in love of brutal sports, and in violence that broke out again and again when the pressure became too great.'²⁴

Most of the movements and tendencies described were not specifically religious but were often viewed as inimical to Christianity. Some, perhaps by a sort of intellectual osmosis, had a profound and pervasive influence on English culture and society generally. Others impinged more directly on the Established Church, being in conflict with traditional Christian teaching. In various ways they contributed to the prevailing milieu. The Established Church was being challenged to respond to these tendencies and ameliorate these moral and social conditions.

²⁴ Marshall, loc. cit., 486.

The State of the Church of England

A major 19th century text dealing with this topic, by CJ Abbey and JH Overton, is *The English Church in the Eighteenth Century* (1867). In assessing the century *as a whole*, which included the beginnings of the so-called Evangelical Revival, Overton acknowledged there were glaring abuses, but thought that even when she reached her nadir the Church never became utterly corrupt.²⁵ Again, speaking specifically of the Church of England, he acknowledged that intellectually her work was a great triumph. It was morally and spiritually that there was great failure.²⁶

Some remarks of contemporary, or near contemporary, church leaders are germane. Granted that the religious state of England was uneven and often varied between town and country, and paying due heed to Bishop Butler's implied warning: 'there is a disposition in men to complain of the viciousness and corruption of the age in which they live as greater than that of former ones'²⁷, nevertheless we note his well-known words in the 'Advertisement' to his *Analogy of Religion* (1736): 'It has come to be

²⁵ See op.cit., 312.

²⁶ See op.cit., 313.

²⁷ Sermons xi.1, cited by A Plummer, *The Church of England in the Eighteenth Century* (1910), 19.

taken for granted that Christianity is not so much a subject for inquiry, but that it is now at length discovered to be fictitious.' Archbishop Secker (1693-1768) had earlier remarked: 'that an open and profound disregard to religion is becoming the distinguishing characteristic of the present age.'²⁸

Attention has also been drawn to the low standard of preaching at the opening of the eighteenth century. CJ Abbey noted 'the pulpit was no longer the power it had been in past days.' He also refers to that degradation of religion which was beginning to lower the Gospel of redemption into a philosophy of morality.²⁹

The estimate of the state of the Church of England in the latter part of the 17th and early 18th centuries as being spiritually moribund and effete was generally accepted, although with certain qualifications, until Professor Norman Sykes published his views in the 1930s. In his landmark work, *Church and State in England in the xviii th Century*, referring specifically to the conventional representation of the Hanoverian Church, 'dilating

²⁸ Cited by Plummer, loc. cit. 19, who quotes Bishop George Berkeley (1685-1753) to the same effect.

²⁹ Loc. cit. 463-465. See also Spence, op. cit., iv, 234.

duly upon its alleged torpor and corruption,'³⁰ Sykes speaks of 'the spell cast upon different minds by the two secessions of its epoch, the Non-juror and the Methodist.'³¹ In particular, with reference to the problems of pluralism and non-residence, he avers that SL Ollard 'cannot escape the tendency to determine his judgment in accordance with anachronistic nineteenth-century standards.'³² Sykes himself adduces evidence to support 'a more sympathetic and impartial survey of the religious tradition and standards of the Hanoverian Church.'³³ Furthermore, he insists the study of the Hanoverian Church must take as its starting point the history of 'the Restoration epoch, of which the Hanoverian age was the descendant by affiliation and reaction.'³⁴

Sykes interprets the eighteenth century as witnessing 'a steady and progressive laicisation of religion, which is the keynote of its ecclesiastical development.'³⁵ Also, whilst acknowledging the

³⁰ N Sykes, *Church and State in England in the xviii th Century*, (Cambridge, 1934), 2.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

³² *Ibid.*, 6.

³³ *Ibid.*, 6,7.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 8.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 379.

comparatively low standard of parochial duty, he claims this 'may be deemed indeed severely inadequate from the standpoint of a later epoch but [it] was accepted as sufficient and satisfactory according to the traditions of that age.'³⁶

Nevertheless, in a later work, Sykes fully recognises 'the eighteenth century witnessed a marked decline of the religious fervour of its predecessor amongst all Churches.'³⁷ Sykes believed there had been exaggeration, even caricature, of the lethargy of the establishment and of the Protestant Dissenters 'in order to bring out more brightly the Methodist revival'; but he accepted 'a temper of pessimism had replaced the earlier optimism'.³⁸ Furthermore, 'the general standards of moral conduct were undoubtedly declining; and in a desperate struggle to improve the tone of society and of its citizens, a rationalistic creed,

³⁶ Ibid., 417.

³⁷ N Sykes, *The English Religious Tradition* (1953), 62.

³⁸ Ibid., 62, 63.

whether orthodox or deist, was impotent to arouse the emotions and effect conversion.³⁹

The English Nonconformists, ministers and people, were also, according to the leading Congregationalist RW Dale, chilled by 'a keen east wind of rationalism', religious indifference at the start of the 18th century, and 'losing their courage and earnestness'.⁴⁰ However, just as John Newton's mother was a deeply pious, experienced Dissenter,⁴¹ there is no reason to doubt there were also Anglican Christians in this post-Restoration period who were broadly conversionist, biblicist, and crucicentrist in their outlook. However, it would not be unfair to characterise the faith of many Anglicans as 'implicit', that is faith resting on the authority of the Church rather than subjectively experienced.

It should be noted that WK Lowther Clarke in his *Eighteenth Century Piety* (1944) took a more positive view of the state of the Church and emphatically denies any suggestion of complacency in the eighteenth century. Nevertheless, he did portray it as 'depressed at times by the

³⁹ Ibid., 63.

⁴⁰ RW Dale, *The Evangelical Revival* (1880), 12, 13.

⁴¹ J Newton, *Out of the Depths* (1935 edn.), 12, 13.

magnitude of the task' facing it and by an awareness of its impotence to remedy this in its own strength.⁴²

We also note that G Rupp, whilst acknowledging great ignorance of the Christian faith among the poorer classes, found evidence of what would now be called 'diffused Christianity'. For many others, however, 'worship was little more than a formal bow to the Supreme Being.'⁴³

Similarly, WM Jacob, asserts that 'most people were committed to their faith *according to their own standards*' (our italics).⁴⁴

We turn to the legacy of influences and movements from within the Church which contributed significantly to its development in the later 18th century and early 19th century.

Cambridge Platonism

Cambridge Platonism was a corporate mystical reaction led by a group of men in the 17th century. Miss EC Gregory stated: 'They claimed supremely to be illuminated by Reason; and this, far from degrading it, as

⁴² Lowther Clarke, *Eighteenth Century Piety* (1944), 28.

⁴³ G Rupp; op. cit., 511.

⁴⁴ WM Jacob, *Lay People and Religion in the Early Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1996), 54.

in the following century, to the sum of man's opinions as a perceptive animal, they understood to be the entire faculty of apprehension...'⁴⁵ It was the first serious attempt to wed Christianity and philosophy made by any Protestant school.

This group of influential philosophical divines flourished at Cambridge between 1633 and 1688. They held that Reason 'could judge the data of revelation by virtue of the indwelling of God in the mind.'. (B Whichcote).'⁴⁶ This mystical view of reason was derived mainly from Neoplatonism. In some ways Cambridge Platonism is an expression of dissatisfaction with the aridity of theological systems.⁴⁷ The fundamentals of authentic Christianity were sought outside the Augustinian tradition and they opposed Calvinism because they perceived it put faith above reason. Their commitment was not so much

⁴⁵ 'Cambridge Platonists' in DECH, 83.

⁴⁶ 'Cambridge Platonists' in ODCC, 271.

⁴⁷ See I Breward, 'Cambridge Platonists' in NDT, 125, 126.

to particular doctrines as to a general Platonistic perspective. This involved a love of truth, a contempt for worldliness, and a concern for justice. Their principal concern was the moral life, which they saw to be the essence of Christianity.⁴⁸ Among the leading Cambridge Platonists were B Whichcote (1609-1683), N Culverwel (d. 1651?), J Smith (1618-1652), R Cudworth (1617-1688) and H More (1614-1687). Whichcote received the cure of St Anne, Blackfriars in 1662 and St Lawrence, Jewry, in 1668. More's writings were said to have been valued by John Wesley.

Latitudinarianism

Closely related to, but to be differentiated from, Cambridge Platonism was Latitudinarianism (c.1690-1740). It was a reaction against the theological controversies and civil wars of the 17th century. It utilised the ideas of Cudworth and the Cambridge Platonists, placing little emphasis on precise points of doctrine and also urging toleration. It has been viewed by some as the prevailing characteristic of the Hanoverian

⁴⁸ See PH De Vries, 'Cambridge Platonists' in EDT, 189.

church.⁴⁹ The appeal to the place of reason and the tendency toward metaphysical speculation characterised the 18th century philosophy of religion.⁵⁰ The sympathies of Latitudinarian divines generally lay with Arminian theology.⁵¹ Latitudinarianism in England has been described as 'uninspired moralism'⁵².

The statement of Bishop G Burnet (1643-1715), who had known the Cambridge Platonists well, helps to clarify the relation of the Cambridge Platonists and the Latitudinarians. The latter 'declare against superstition on the one hand, and enthusiasm on the other. They loved the constitution of the Church, and the liturgy, and would well live under them; but they did not think it unlawful to live under another form'.⁵³ Because they allowed great freedom both in philosophy and divinity, they were called men of latitude. A major point of difference from the Cambridge Platonists was their rejection of religious experience and exclusion of *feeling* from religion. Their tendency was to stress the natural ability of the rational mind to grasp the essentials of religion, thus dispensing with the need of revelation. Their inclination was to formulate faith in minimal terms.

⁴⁹ See JA Cannon, 'Latitudinarianism' in OCBH, 562.

⁵⁰ See WO Chadwick, 'England, Church of' in EB, viii, 436.

⁵¹ See also 'Latitudinarianism' in ODCC. 956.

⁵² AR Vidler, *The Church in an Age of Revolution* (Harmondsworth, 1974), 12.

⁵³ Cited by SC Neill, *Anglicanism*, (Harmondsworth, 1965), 160.

The effects on contemporary pulpit preaching are clearly stated by Horton Davies. He sees the characteristic marks of the theology of the period as: 'the reduction of the supernatural to the natural, the mysterious to the rational, and the depreciation of faith in favour of the good works of charity.'⁵⁴ Thus, he entitles the period as "The Dominance of Rationalistic Moralism."⁵⁵ Commenting on a paragraph from one of Tillotson's sermons Horton Davies says; 'Here is an unequalled combination of eudaemonism, utilitarianism, and pelagianism masquerading as Christianity.'⁵⁵ Again, referring to what he calls 'Tillotson's urbane portrait of the founder of Christianity', Davies remarks: 'The portrait owes more to the Aristotelian mean than to the Gospels and both the sense of God's sheer generosity in grace and the paradox of the God-man ... are lost in the all-too-human picture of the incarnate Son of God.'⁵⁶ There is little doubt that the Cambridge Platonist-Latitudinarian tendency was to weaken the established Church's adherence to the concept of Scripture as the rule of faith. However, to those whose lives were bleak and uncertain, 'the confident simplicities

⁵⁴ Horton Davies, *Worship and Theology in England, 1690-1850* (Cambridge, 1996), Book II, 3.

⁵⁵ Davies, op. cit., 56.

⁵⁶ Davies, loc.cit.

and mechanistic philosophizing of the latitudinarians were incomprehensible'.⁵⁷

We conclude that the Enlightenment, whilst not in every aspect inimical with Evangelicalism, and indeed in some respects may have helped to purge it of unbiblical accretions (superstition, for example), nevertheless in its general tendency was antagonistic towards revealed religion. Thus the prevailing philosophical ethos and cultural mood, both within and without the Church, in the early eighteenth century was increasingly one of deep questioning and even scepticism.

The State of the Church of England in London.

What was true of the Church of England nationally was generally true of it in London. In London there were problems with the size of parishes. Marylebone, in 1800, with a population of 40,000, had only one Anglican church, seating 200. Further, whereas in 1812 there were only 186 Anglican places of worship in London, there were 256 Dissenting ones.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ RK Webb, *Modern England* (1986), 39.

⁵⁸ See Porter, *English Society in the Eighteenth Century* (1990), 175.

The religious decline was to be seen in other ways. Regarding daily services offered, whereas 'in 1728 the number had dwindled to fifty-two, by 1732 there were but forty-four.'⁵⁹ Only ten out of a projected fifty churches planned by The London Churches Act of 1711 were actually constructed.

London's religion's waning influence was not restricted to parishes, personal mores and social habits. 'Public life was assuming a more secular air.' Indeed, religion itself was becoming eclipsed. 'A culture of sociability – hedonism even – was emerging, increasingly secular in form and content, contributing to what has been called the commercialization of leisure.'⁶⁰ To Sir John Barnard, lord mayor of London (1737) and MP for London (1751), is attributed the statement: it 'really seems to be the fashion for a man to declare himself of no religion'.⁶¹ However, Porter is circumspect in speaking of religious apathy 'for practical piety found abundant expression in energetic philanthropy in a century notable for charitable foundations.' The tendency to religious decline was

⁵⁹ Porter, op. cit., 45.

⁶⁰ Porter, *London: A Social History* (1994), 200-203.

⁶¹ Spence, op. cit., iv, 239.

particularly evident among the masses.⁶² Furthermore, increasingly, the gulfs between ruler and ruled, rich and poor, came to dominate life.⁶³

In London there was a greater degree of sophistication of the churches as compared with those in the country. The music was better. In SC Carpenter's view: 'The preachers aimed at pleasing the more cultured part of the congregation. And did little for the simple.' The sermon was generally a moral essay.⁶⁴ It may also be that the desire not to upset the laity influenced the content of clerical preaching. G Rupp draws attention to the prevalent use by the later clergy of the published sermons of seventeenth century London divines such as Whichcote, Barrow, South and Tillotson. He wrote: 'The range of their themes [in Tillotson and Samuel Clarke] is much wider than the mere moralism with which they are associated. But the moralism is certainly there.'⁶⁵ Rack, however, maintains that when they chose to do so, preachers were perfectly able to assert the necessity of the atonement, grace and faith for salvation.⁶⁶

⁶² See Porter, op. cit., 364.

⁶³ See Porter, *English Society*, also SC Carpenter, *Church and People 1789-1889* (1959), 27.

⁶⁴ See Carpenter, *Eighteenth Century Church and People* (1959), 189, 191.

⁶⁵ Rupp, op.cit., 514. See also Carpenter, op. cit., 189, 191.

⁶⁶ HD Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast* (1989), 25.

Other authors cite the words of Bishop Edmund Gibson (1669-1748), generally regarded as one of the most learned and eminent men of his time, who was translated to London in 1723. In 1724 he felt constrained to tell his London clergy: 'We are Christian preachers and not barely preachers of morality...the main end of Christ's coming was to establish a new covenant with mankind, founded upon new terms and new promises; to show us a new way of obtaining forgiveness of sins and reconciliation to God and eternal happiness ... These are without doubt the main ingredients of the Gospel, those by which Christianity stands distinguished from all other religions.'⁶⁷ In fairness we should note Carpenter's comment on the strictures of Sir William Blackstone on London preaching, cited earlier: 'this very severe criticism is not borne out by the sermons which have survived'.⁶⁸ However, we should remember that Blackstone was a former Fellow of All Souls (1744), first professor of English law, Oxford, (1758-66) and solicitor-general to the queen (1763), so his opinion was not likely to be frivolous.

Carpenter referred to 'a considerable revival of Church life' in the reign of Anne (1707-1714), and alludes to *Pietas Londiniensis*, published 1714. The author of the work records that in seventy-one churches, nearly all of

⁶⁷ Cited by C Hole, *A Manual of English Church History* (1910), 348.

⁶⁸ *Op.cit.*, 191.

which were in the city proper, there was daily service, either once or twice a day, in seventy-three there were some week-day services and in ten there was Holy Communion every Sunday.⁶⁹ However, we must also note Carpenter's further comment: 'Vast numbers in the slums of London ...were living wholly illiterate and almost wholly wretched lives. Whilst for the many illiterate people the greater part of the Church had no message.'

If some bishops tended to be inactive and town clergy ministered to their own large congregations, it was not only the clergy who were to blame for the comfortable torpor which reflected the relaxed religious attitudes of London's mainly leisured congregations.⁷⁰ GFA Best, indeed, speaks of 'the contempt and disregard which seems to have been a common upper-class attitude towards the mass of the clergy in the early eighteenth century'.⁷¹ In one respect it seems the clergy were more concerned about their standing in the eyes of the laity than their ministerial duties.

⁶⁹ See op.cit., 189.

⁷⁰ See Francis Sheppard, *London: A History* (Oxford, 1998), 240.

⁷¹ GFA Best, *Temporal Pillars* (Cambridge, 1964), 70.

Patronage was seen to be needful 'to those who would climb the steep ascent to the higher ranks' (of all professions).⁷²

George Rude offered a very gloomy depiction of the London scene in which pluralism and non-residence were common until the 1850s. Incumbents were reluctant to give up a London parish even when promoted or translated elsewhere. He stated that at the end of the 17th century 43 incumbents of City churches had country livings and most influential preachers were pluralists, and that in 1810 there were 147 curates of non-resident incumbents of London parishes, and of these only 84 were licensed and resident. This needs to be balanced by Viviane Barrie-Curien's important observation that 'both these evils were mitigated to a certain extent at least in the diocese of London owing to the proximity of livings and the great number of curates.'⁷³ Walsh and Taylor in their 'Introduction' to the same volume appear to share Barrie-Curien's cautious optimism about the religious practice and clerical professionalism in this period: 'London was so well endowed with

⁷² G Rupp, *Religion in England 1688-1791* (Oxford, 1986), 495.

⁷³ Barrie-Curien, 'London Clergy in the eighteenth century' in J Walsh, C Haydon, S Taylor (eds), *The Church of England c.1689-1833* (Cambridge, 1993), 94. See also her 'The Church of England in the Diocese of London in the eighteenth Century' in Gregory and Chamberlain (eds), op. cit.

preacherships that the vast majority of its parishes were served by two or more ministers.⁷⁴

Precursors

High Church Spirituality

With regard to John Wesley, Gladstone observed: 'first, that the course of Wesley takes its origin from the bosom of devout but high Anglicanism ... Second, that with this origin it should still, perhaps, be regarded as having given the main impulse, out of which sprang the Evangelical movement. Thirdly, that while it imparted the main impulse, it did not stamp upon that movement its specific character.'¹ Nevertheless, with regard to Anglican Evangelicalism, we need to remember Walsh's observation: 'the ethos ... was largely formed by men who owed little or nothing to Methodism, and stood increasingly apart from it.'² However, the roots of the Revival have sometimes been 'traced down into that rich alluvial deposit of High Church piety which in the 1730s was still a deep

⁷⁴ Walsh and Taylor, op. cit., 8.

¹ Gladstone, 'The Evangelical Movement; its Parentage, Progress, and Issue', in *The British Quarterly Review* (July, 1879), 3, 4.

² J Walsh, 'Origins of the Evangelical Revival' in Bennett and Walsh, op. cit., 136.

and varied stratum of Anglican spirituality.³ Thus, whatever may be said as to the Church's belief and preaching: 'Spirituality was not entirely dormant, for the Wesleyan revival is best understood within the High Church tradition of William Law.'⁴ This tradition was not identical with the 'dry scholastics of ordinary High Churchmen' which repelled many.⁵

'High Churchmen' could be 'broadly defined to include those churchmen who stressed the apostolic order, continuity, authority and discipline of the visible Church, the necessity of the apostolic succession for the constitution of a true priesthood, the role of baptism in bringing the Christian within the Covenant of Grace, and of the Eucharist in sustaining him therein, the value of a strict attachment to the ordinances, Liturgy, and festivals of the Church.'⁶ Although, during the 18th century, 'High Churchman' retained a political rather than an ecclesiastical meaning⁷, often virtually synonymous with 'Tory', in origin it was a spiritual movement. Thus, it was not inconsistent for High Churchmen to maintain

³ See Walsh, op. cit. 138.

⁴ Edward Royle, *Modern Britain* (1997), 293.

⁵ See Webb, *Modern England* (1986).

⁶ Walsh, loc. cit., 138

⁷ See SL Ollard, 'Church, High, Low, Broad,' in DECH, 117.

the Church's institutional authority on the one hand and to promote religious and moral reformation on the other.⁸

Significantly, for our focus on London, Mark Noll maintains that a robust strand of High Church piety survived in the metropolis, adding: 'The crucial spiritual emphasis for this movement was its stress on "primitive Christianity" or the faith thought to have been practised with great purity in the church's very first centuries.'⁹ At the very least, this High Church spirituality indicated a continuing desire on the part of some for spiritual religion.

Calvinism

Calvinism should not to be equated with what is known as 'Hyper-Calvinism'. From the 17th century there have always been some professed Calvinists who have had difficulty with the free and inclusive character of God's promises to sinners in the Bible. Some have taken the view that they should not be offered to the unconverted at all. However,

⁸ See Ditchfield, *The Evangelical Revival* (1998), 37.

⁹ MA Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism* (Leicester, 2004), 59, 60.

‘mainstream’ Calvinists have always rejected such views as a perversion.¹⁰

Reputable scholars, still today, hold Calvin in high esteem. Thus, ‘His theological insight, his exegetical talents, his knowledge of languages, his precision and his clear and pithy style, made him the most influential writer among the reformers. His *Institutes* are still regarded as one of the most important literary and theological works of the period.’¹¹ Packer remarks: ‘the focal centre of Calvin’s concern with the intellectual structure of the knowledge of God was his anxiety that men should think biblically of Christ and of grace.’¹² This, fundamentally, is also the theology of the Anglican Reformers which was enshrined in 1571 in The Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, to which all clergy of the Church of England were required to subscribe.

However, Walsh and Taylor maintain ‘By 1730 the old Calvinist clergyman was not merely an endangered, but almost a vanished,

¹⁰ See JI Packer, *Serving the People of God* (Carlisle, 1998), 209.

¹¹ ‘Calvin, John’ in ODCC, 267.

¹² Packer, ‘Calvin the Theologian’ in *John Calvin* (Abingdon, 1966), 158.

species,'¹³ and Whitefield averred: 'Alas! I have never read anything that Calvin wrote. My doctrines I had from Christ and His apostles. I was taught them of God; and as God was pleased to send me out first, and to enlighten me first, so I think he still continues to do it ...'¹⁴

Puritanism

Few words have been more misunderstood or misapplied than 'puritanism'. To many it is a term of obloquy, often implying self-righteousness or sanctimonious over-scrupulosity. To others it suggests only or mainly a desire to carry the reformation of the Church of England further by purifying it of ceremony.

The intellectual strength and coherence of the Puritan theological tradition is now increasingly acknowledged by historians,¹⁵ and Puritanism's general extension of the thought of the English Reformation, with its distinctive emphases, notably, God's sovereignty in personal salvation, and the indispensability of the Bible as a guide to life.¹⁶ Packer

¹³ Op. cit. 43.

¹⁴ Cited by L Tyerman, op. cit., i, 403, 404.

¹⁵ See I Breward, 'Puritan Theology' in NDT, 552.

¹⁶ See MA Noll, 'Puritanism' in EDT, 898. These aspects of Puritanism hardly receive attention in DECH (See JN Figgis 'Puritanism', 493-496) or ODCC (See 'Puritans'. 1351).

asserts, in addition, 'Puritanism was at heart a spiritual movement, passionately concerned with God and godliness.'¹⁷

The Puritan literature is vast and their works were regularly republished. It was said of Richard Baxter (1615-91) 'There never has been a day since 1649 that something by him was not in print.'¹⁸ Similarly, various works by John Owen (1616-1683) were republished in 1717, 1720, 1722; and, particularly, his *Works* were published in 1721 and his *Pneumatologia* in 1791. His full *Works* (Goold's edition 24 volumes) were published later, in 1850-55.

To what extent was Evangelicalism a resurgence of Puritanism? It is undoubtedly true that Evangelicalism and Puritanism shared the broad tradition of Reformed religion, notably the prominence given to Covenant theology in preaching and literature, also the jargon used and the imagery deployed.¹⁹ However, as Walsh asserts, the Evangelical's theology also marked a reaction against what he considered to be extravagances of Puritanism: 'the illuminism of some of the sects or the metaphysical speculations of learned Calvinistic divines who still moved – as

¹⁷ Packer, *Among God's Giants* (Eastbourne, 1991), 31, 32.

¹⁸ AB Grosart, 'Baxter, Richard' in DNB, i, 113.

¹⁹ See Walsh, op. cit., 134.

evangelicals did not – in the framework of a scholastic tradition.’ Further, some experienced an evangelical conversion well before they received an evangelical theology: ‘the experience was primary, the doctrine explanatory, accepted largely because it provided a convincing rationale for the experience.’²⁰

Puritan literature was read mainly by dissenters but it was readily available to any who desired it. Once a believer started serious reading of Scripture there was always the likelihood that a renewed spiritual hunger would lead to the quest for other edifying literature. William Grimshaw appears to have had ready access to John Owen on *Justification* at the house of a friend.²¹ Walsh appositely points out: ‘In spirit Evangelicalism was a return to the fundamentals of the Puritan tradition...But equally striking are the differences. The Evangelical is another person from the Puritan; often less grave, generally less learned, less obsessed with definitions, far less scrupulous over niceties of creed or liturgy, unentangled in politics.’²²

²⁰ Op. cit., 154, 155. See also his ‘Yorkshire Evangelicals in the Eighteenth Century’, Ph.D. thesis (Cambridge, 1956), 12.

²¹ See F Baker, *William Grimshaw: 1708-1763*, (Epworth, 1963), 43, 45.

²² Walsh, op. cit.

Moral and Religious Societies

John Spurr observes: 'It has become a commonplace that running alongside the dynastic, constitutional and ecclesiastical revolutions of 1688 was a revolution in expectations about public manners or a "moral revolution" as DWR Bahlman dubbed it.'²³ Following Bahlman and others, Spurr accepts that by the 1690s 'many Anglicans had come to the conclusion that the reaction against strict attitudes to morals and religion which occurred with the restoration of Charles II had been excessive.'²⁴ However, whilst it might have been expected that the Church of England would play a leading role in striving for the reformation of the nation's morals, the clergy, in fact, were divided over the usefulness and desirability of the Anglican laity forming voluntary associations for pious purposes.²⁵ Whilst the first Religious Societies were distinctly Anglican, when in 1691 the first Societies for the Reformation of Manners, recruiting from the Religious Societies, were formed, they soon ceased to be exclusively Anglican. Not surprisingly, some High Churchmen strongly disapproved of a society in which laymen and even Dissenters were allowed to take part. It appears that the clergy generally had not

²³ J Spurr, 'The Church, the Societies and the moral revolution of 1688' in Walsh, Haydon, Taylor (eds), op. cit., 127f.

²⁴ Citing DWR Bahlman, *The Moral Revolution of 1688* (Newhaven, 1957), 22.

²⁵ See Spurr, op. cit., 128.

foreseen that the laity would take matters into their own hands and organize themselves in pursuit of moral revolution, and certainly not that they would co-operate with other denominations for this purpose.²⁶ Walsh sees the Societies as 'formed to fill up part of the space vacated by the state, as it withdrew itself further from active support of the establishment.'²⁷

In London the identity of the first persons to suggest the formation of these religious societies is not known but the societies became 'a feature of London life in the 1690s'.²⁸ Probably the best-known society in the Restoration Church is that which began in 1678 or 1679 when a number of young London men approached Anthony Horneck, preacher at the Savoy Chapel, for spiritual direction. It seems that the devout impulses behind this approach were the sermons of Dr Horneck and the Sunday morning lectures of William Smithies (curate at St.Giles, Cripplegate) which were 'chiefly designed for the instruction of youth' at St Michael, Cornhill.

²⁶ See Spurr, op. cit., 131.

²⁷ 'Religious Societies: Methodist and Evangelical 1738-1800' in WJ Shiels and D Wood (eds.), *Studies in Church History 23: Voluntary Religion* (1986), 279, 280.

²⁸ Spurr, op. cit., 134.

Amongst the earliest of the religious societies was that started in 1684 in Ave-Mary Lane about which Smithies was accused of 'praying, reading and catechizing in a "Private Meeting"'. However, we know that in 1681 "the devout young men" of St Martin-in-the-Fields drew up articles of association, restricting membership to those who "frequent our parish church" and who have received the sacrament or declared "they will do so as they have opportunity", and "if any person shall neglect coming to the holy sacrament three times together without a very good reason, he shall be excluded". The society met at five o'clock every third Sunday of the month, "in decent order with our hats off", their "monitor" read "some prayer as shall be useful for our purpose", the stewards read a chapter out of the Bible, and then any of the society repeated the heads of a sermon "or anything else that is useful for us". The other purpose of their meeting was to take a collection for the poor to be distributed by "the Doctor".²⁹

Some of these societies went underground and became 'clubs', meeting in alehouses; whilst others were emboldened in the face of danger, thus at St Clement Dane public prayers were set up at 8 p.m. daily and a monthly evening lecture provided to confirm communicants in the holy purposes and vows they had made at the holy table.³⁰ Members were usually young, mostly tradesmen "of the middling sort", and of "sober education".

²⁹ See Spurr, loc. cit., 133.

³⁰ Ibid.

AG Craig, citing Robert Kirkman, referring to St Clement Dane and St Lawrence Jewry, gives further insight into the nature and strength of the religious societies: 'There be two societies where about sixty in each contribute for daily prayers, and meet one hour twice a week for conference about cases of conscience, questions of divinity to be resolved, advice for advancing a trade, getting a maintenance, helping the sick of their society, visiting and exhorting them, and the like.'³¹

Also, Josiah Woodward, in reference to London societies generally, states: 'They procure sermons by way of preparation for the Lord's Supper, or to engage a sutable [*sic*] Holiness of Life after it, every Lord's Day about five in the Evening, in many of the largest Churches in the City. Their Charity is extended to deserving Objects in all the Parts of the City and Suburbs.'³² Finally, 'We know of 14 such societies, with a total of 298 members, in London in 1694; by 1698 the number of societies had increased to 32 and the next year to 39.'³³

³¹ AG Craig, citing R Kirkman *Movement for the Reformation of Manners*, 79.

³² J Woodward, *Account of the Religious Societies*, 131.

³³ See Spurr, *op. cit.*, 134, also Walsh in Shiels and Wood (eds), *op. cit.*, 280.

Significantly, Walsh and Taylor see that 'The societies of the age of Horneck and Woodward were a manifestation of lay dissatisfaction with the repetitive routine of parish services on Sundays and of the desire for something more informal.'³⁴ WM Jacob disputes this: 'It seems unlikely, in view of their emphasis on the use of the Prayer Book at their meetings...' but he concedes that these meetings 'do suggest a desire for something more informal and more personal.'³⁵ The usefulness of the Religious Societies as providing recruiting grounds and reception points for the Revival has been noted by HD Rack, who also sees them as meeting 'the need felt by pious London tradesmen and apprentices for something more than public worship and purely individual piety'.³⁶

A particular example of the influence of the religious societies in London is seen in the person of William Holland (d.1761). They created 'a constituency ripe for the revivalists'³⁷ which is modelled on his own Anglican progress through them into Moravianism (which he left in 1747). Having long felt a lack of religious fellowship he was delighted in

³⁴ 'Introduction: the Church and Anglicanism in the "long" eighteenth century.' in Walsh, Haydon, Taylor, op.cit., 24. See also J Walsh, op. cit., 282.

³⁵ Jacob, op. cit., 90.

³⁶ Rack, op. cit., 23.

³⁷ See WR Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening* (Cambridge, 1992), 340, 341. Ward cites William Holland's MS "Short Account of some few matters relating to the work of the Lord in England" (1745).

1732 to be invited to join a London religious society. Of the thirty or forty of these societies in the City and suburbs of London, Ward notes the members were all of the episcopal church and, having received the sacrament every Sunday morning at 6 o'clock, 'most members would attend their own parish church on Sunday mornings but in the afternoons would go to hear ministers whom they thought "preached most spiritual & lived also according to their doctrine."' Ward sees Holland's experience as an example of how 'a religious pilgrimage [could be] diverted from the Church of England (temporarily) into Moravianism by a liberating conversion experience without any sense of institutional discontinuity'.³⁸

Moravian Pietism

The Moravian Church originated in Germany late in the seventeenth century. Through the influence of NL von Zinzendorf the Brethren community developed a strong pietistic element and 'they came to feel that they had a particular calling to witness to Christ among people who did not know Him rather than establish a new Church in places where

³⁸ WR Ward, loc. cit.

Christianity was already established.³⁹ Ditchfield summarises: 'Though not easy to define, the term ['Moravian'] denotes a highly personal form of religion, with a strong emphasis on the individual's direct relationship with God and the need for a "New Birth" to cement that relationship.'⁴⁰ The Pietists practised and encouraged a domestic approach to religion which did not restrict itself to formal church services. Spener arranged class meetings, often in private houses, when those taking part reviewed their religious life, provided mutual support and exhorted each other in the devotional reading of Scripture.⁴¹ Their emphasis was on fellowship rather than credal statements.

It was on their journey to Georgia, aboard the *Simmons*, in January 1736 that the Wesley brothers first encountered Moravian missionaries. This was to prove to be one of the decisive steps leading to their conversions. It is easy to see how Londoners, who had already had experience of the Religious Societies would have found Moravian piety attractive. Walsh notes that 'By 1742 the Moravians reckoned that half their London congregation members were former members of the societies.'⁴²

³⁹ 'Moravian Brethren' in ODCC, 1112.

⁴⁰ Ditchfield, *op. cit.*, 11.

⁴¹ See Ditchfield, *op. cit.*, 12.

⁴² *Op. cit.* 147, citing W Holland, 'Account of the Beginnings of the Brethren Work in England,' (John Rylands Eng. MS. 1076 [6]).

The decision to form a society for speakers of English was made by the Moravian, Peter Bohler, with his associates.⁴³ It subsequently became known as the Fetter Lane Society from the location to which its meetings moved later. Walsh sees the Moravians as a crucial influence in that it was they 'who relayed to members of the Holy Club and the religious societies the doctrines of justification by faith alone, and of the assurance of that faith – to which they stood living witnesses.'⁴⁴

It is particularly interesting to note the value John Newton later attached to his experience of these societies: 'I had likewise access to some religious societies, and became known to many excellent Christians in private life. Thus, when in London, I lived at the fountain-head, as it were, for spiritual advantages'⁴⁵

The Influence of Earlier Literature

Literature plays a significant part in most religious movements, although it may be difficult to quantify. We know that John Wesley was

⁴³ See Noll, op. cit., 86, 87.

⁴⁴ Walsh, in Bennett and Walsh (eds), op.cit., 157.

⁴⁵ Newton, *Out of the Depths*, 143, 144.

influenced by Thomas a Kempis's 'Christian Pattern', *The Imitation of Christ*, (c.1415-1424), William Law's *Christian Perfection* and *Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life* (1729), Bishop Jeremy Taylor's rules for *Holy Living* (1650), and *Dying* (1651), and Martin Luther's Preface to *the Epistle to the Romans*⁴⁶ and Henry Scougal's *The Life of God in the Soul of Man* (anonymously 1677). So, too, George Whitefield learned from Scougal that 'True Religion is an Union of the Soul with God, a real participation of the divine nature, the very image of God drawn upon the Soul, or in the Apostle's phrase, it is Christ formed within us.'⁴⁷ William Grimshaw was powerfully affected by reading Thomas Brooks's *Precious Remedies against Satan's Devices*, 1652.⁴⁸ Among other influential authors were Lewis Bayly,⁴⁹ Richard Baxter,⁵⁰ Isaac Watts⁵¹ and Philip Doddridge.⁵² It is inconceivable that these titles were not available in London and its environs.

⁴⁶ See his *Journal 1738*, Sunday 21 May.

⁴⁷ Cited by J Pollock, *Whitefield: The Evangelist* (Eastbourne, 2000), 19.

⁴⁸ See Baker, *William Grimshaw, 1708-1763* (Epworth, 1963), 43, 44.

⁴⁹ *The Practice of Piety*, which went through 59 editions in English alone.

⁵⁰ *The Saints Everlasting Rest*, (1650).

⁵¹ *The Improvement of the Mind* (1741).

⁵² *The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul* (1745).

Our survey of the moral, intellectual and religious lineaments prior to the period of our study has already suggested that the rise of Anglican Evangelicalism was a much more complex phenomenon than has sometimes been understood. In an entirely different setting KT Hoppen has referred to a context of “interlocking spheres” or the manner in which the public culture of the period [1846-1886] ...was generated, not by a series of influences operating separately, but by means of developments resonating reciprocally ...⁵³ It is this kind of inter-meshed context which, perhaps, best facilitates an understanding of the development of London Anglican Evangelicalism. Clearly the human responses to these various influences differed widely. Thus, for those seeking what later came to be called ‘vital religion’ or ‘religion of the heart’ the precursors specified generally provided a fertile soil in which the seminal phase of the Evangelical revival could take root, even having a catalytic effect. For others, however, certain antecedents may have served to re-inforce the contemporary *Zeitgeist* thus leading to a more conscious espousal of religious apathy or scepticism. At any rate, all these influences contributed in some way to the cultural milieu of the eighteenth century and the ambience in which Evangelicalism originated and grew.

⁵³ KT Hoppen, *The mid-Victorian Generation* (Oxford, 1998), 3, 4.

3. THE ORIGINS AND BIRTH OF ANGLICAN EVANGELICALISM IN LONDON (1736-1779)

We now seek to locate the roots of London Evangelicalism more precisely.

Whitefield and the Wesleys

To what extent should Whitefield and the Wesleys be regarded as Anglican Evangelicals, and what was their influence on London Evangelicalism?

As far as origins are concerned, Patrick Streiff is in no doubt that 'The Methodist Revival was actually started neither by John Wesley nor by his brother Charles, but by George Whitefield.'¹ George Whitefield dated his conversion experience in 1735. He was ordained in 1736 in London on 8th August. Thus, '...in the afternoon, I preached at Bishopsgate Church, the largeness of which, and the congregation together, at first a little dazed

¹ P Streiff, *Reluctant Saint* (Peterborough, 2001), 26.

² Iain Murray (ed.), *George Whitefield's Journals* (1960 edn.), 77.

me'² Whitefield's popularity continued to increase – 'I now preached generally nine times a week' and 'On Sunday mornings, long before day, you might see streets filled with people going to church ...'³

Whitefield was no administrator, but he possessed an extraordinary preaching ability. From the outset he was very popular and vast crowds attended his preaching. Typical of the entries in his *Journal* is one dated 1737: 'I was invited to preach at Cripplegate, S. Ann's, and Forster Lane churches, at six on the Lord's Day morning... I also preached at Wapping Chapel, the Tower, Ludgate, Newgate, and many of the churches where weekly lectures were kept up. The congregations continually increased, and generally, on a Lord's Day, I used to preach four times to very large and very affected auditories ...'⁴ He was also 'in demand among the London societies as a preacher and did much to ginger them up.'⁵ However, his popularity was not admitted by all. Hence, again in 1737, 'Not all spoke well of me. No; as my popularity increased, opposition

³ Ibid., 88. For further entries relating to Whitefield's London ministry (1738-1739), see 193-198, 258-266, 275-278, 315-317.

⁴ *Journal*, 87.

⁵ Walsh, 'Religious Societies: Methodist and Evangelical 1738-1800' in WJ Shiels and D Wood (eds.), op. cit., 284.

increased also. At first, many of the clergy were my hearers and admirers; but some grew angry, and complaints were made that the churches were so crowded that there was no room for the parishioners, and that the pews were spoiled.' ⁶ Such complaints were intended to silence him.

After a brief visit to America he perceived in 1738: 'God has greatly watered the seed sown by my ministry when last in London.' He met the Archbishop of Canterbury (John Potter) and the Bishop of London (Edmund Gibson) and had 'a favourable reception'. On 10th December he 'had an opportunity of preaching in the morning at St. Helen's, and at Islington in the afternoon, to large congregations.' On 30th December his entry reads: 'Preached nine times this week, and expounded near eighteen times, with great power and enlargement.' On 31st December he 'preached twice to large congregations, especially in the afternoon, at Spitalfields.' Again, on 6th January : 'Preached six times this week, and should have preached a seventh time, but the minister would not permit me...'

However, in 1739 two events took place in London which proved to be highly significant for his future ministry. The first was his preaching at St. Margaret's, Westminster on Sunday 4th February. He understood from

⁶ *Journal*, 89. See also 193, 195, 197 for following citations.

friends that arrangements had been made with the churchwardens, minister and trustees, for him to preach. However, either such arrangements had not been made as he supposed or his detractors subsequently invented the story that he intruded into the pulpit against their wishes. He writes, on 11th February 'several lies have been told in the *News* about my preaching at St. Margaret's last Sunday.'⁷ It has to be said, however, that Whitefield was sometimes remarkably imprudent and provocative. In a 'Letter to the Religious Societies' he made the bald statement: 'it is most certain, that the Generality of our modern Prophets or Preachers, even the *most zealous of them*, are no better than the Pharisees of Old, or the *Papists* of the present time.'⁸

The second event, in 1739, changing the direction of his ministry, was his visit to Islington on Friday, 27th April. He was well received by 'the Rev. Mr. Stonehouse' but the churchwarden 'demanded me to produce my licence, or otherwise he forbad my preaching in that pulpit.' The upshot was that 'for the sake of peace' he declined to preach from the pulpit but 'after the communion service was over, I preached in the churchyard'.⁹ This became his regular practice at Islington and established a new pattern of preaching in London. Typically, we read, 'Preached in the

⁷ *Journal*, 211.

⁸ Cited by HS Stout, *The Divine Dramatist* (Michigan, 1991), 71.

⁹ *Journal*, 259.

morning at Moorfields, to an exceeding great multitude.' And again, at Kennington Common 'where no less than thirty thousand people were supposed to be present.'¹⁰ Whether because of jealousy of Whitefield's eloquence, abhorrence of his distinctive message, horror of his open-air preaching and methods or genuine fear of his undermining of the authority of the Church and supposed subversive social impact, more and more pulpits were being closed to him. But if he was 'harshly censured by some', he was nonetheless 'eagerly sought by many more'.¹¹

Having been excluded from most Church pulpits in London, Whitefield devoted more of his energies to preaching in or planting chapels. The first Church founded in London by the evangelist was Moorfields Tabernacle in 1741. It remained central to his whole career. Moorfields was located on a public park¹² where crowds regularly gathered seeking

¹⁰ Op. cit., 260.

¹¹ See Noll, op. cit., 91.

¹² Belden, op. cit., 193.

entertainment. Whitefield deliberately set a time for his preaching at Moorfields in the early morning: 'Because the time preceded the scheduled morning prayers, he could not be accused of competing with the churches.'¹³ It became the norm that there should be a regimen of daily preaching and three sermons on Sunday.¹⁴ Whitefield had always insisted that he did not desire to form societies or sects. It was by sheer force of circumstances and the obduracy of the Church of England that his Tabernacles became Churches.¹⁵ It should be noted, however, that the company of preachers he gathered about him were 'lay' people and thus ministers without episcopal ordination.

Whitefield's *Journals* are replete with references to preaching occasions at Islington, Kennington Common, and Moorfields, which formed a triangle for much of his open-air preaching. The numbers quoted as attending were enormous but some allowance for exaggeration and miscalculation must be made. At 'a place called Mayfair, near Hyde Park

¹³ See Stout, op. cit., 78.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Belden, op. cit., 193.

¹⁶ Belden, op. cit., 277.

Corner' on 1st June, 1739 he estimated 'near eighty thousand people'¹⁶ However, numbers must have been very large. The hearers were often of differing social rank. In 1739 on 6th May at Kennington Whitefield noted; 'I believe there were no less than fifty thousand people, and near fourscore coaches, besides great numbers of horses.' At Blackheath on June 12 'Several people of different ranks stood by as before.'¹⁷ So too, at Hampstead Heath, 'the audience was of the politer sort.'¹⁸

The strength of the opposition to Whitefield was indicated by the publication of Dr. Joseph Trapp's pamphlet (65 pages) entitled *The Nature, Folly, Sin and Danger of being Righteous Overmuch, with a particular view to the Doctrines and Practices of certain Modern Enthusiasts. Being the substance of four discourses lately at the Parish Church of Christ Church and St. Lawrence, Jewry, London, and St. Martin-in-the-Fields, Westminster* (1739). Dr. Trapp was the first professor of Poetry at Oxford (1708-1718) and president of Sion College. He particularly complained of Whitefield's claims to be a teacher 'not only of all the laity in all parts of the Kingdom, but of the teachers themselves, the learned clergy, many of them learned before he was

¹⁷ Ibid., 288.

¹⁸ Ibid., 265.

born', and of his 'height of presumption, confidence, and self-sufficiency, so great as to cause the greatest laughter, were it not so deplorable and detestable ...'¹⁹ The editor of the *Weekly Miscellany*, the principal organ of the Church of England at the time (5th May 1739), also resorted to ridicule.²⁰

This hostility which Whitefield now frequently experienced in London was not only from the clergy. Sometimes the mob was disruptive. This was illustrated later by a crisis caused by an invitation to him to take over Long Acre Chapel, Soho in 1756. It was from this chapel that 'Whitefield's blasts against the major play-houses at Covent Garden and Drury Lane were well-known and frequent'.²¹ This chapel was located in the parish of St Martin in the Fields of which the vicar was Zachary Pearce (1690-1774) who was also Dean of Winchester (1739 f.) and Bishop of Bangor (1748 f.). Whitefield had intended to operate this as a chapel of ease of the Established Church even though it was licensed for dissenting preachers. At any rate a sharp conflict arose and Pearce protested strongly. It is probable that the constant disruption of

¹⁹ Cited by Belden, op. cit., 74.

²⁰ Belden, op.cit., 74, 75.

²¹ Stout, op.cit., 237.

Whitefield's preaching by a mob was connected with Pearce's protest and it was soon decided that it would be preferable to move and another site at Tottenham Court was purchased and a 'tabernacle' was built. A more permanent and very much larger Tabernacle, 'capable of containing 4000 people', was later opened and was soon 'crowded ...with aristocracy and poor alike.'²² It was here that Whitefield enjoyed 'golden seasons' and from here, probably, that 'Whitefield with his customary "flair" for an "occasion" went boldly into Hyde Park at night to wrestle with the multitude.'²³ It was to become known as a 'Mother' of Churches in central London. It is noteworthy that after the Countess of Huntingdon had taken it over 'It was nine years before any layman or dissenter spoke in it (presumably when it was licensed)'.²⁴

As to Whitefield's loyalty as an Anglican, he rarely declared it publicly but he certainly thought of himself as a loyal Anglican. There is little doubt that he valued highly the Church's sacramental piety and liturgy.²⁵ However, Stout does also speak of Whitefield's 'strained relations with

²² Belden, op.cit., 200.

²³ Belden, op.cit., 184.

²⁴ I am indebted to Prof. Peter Lineham for much in this paragraph and particularly for his references to Whitefield's correspondence with the Countess of Huntingdon 2nd May 1756 and 2 June 1756 (*Select collection of letters*, iii. 177, 182), also to Mr D- 12th November 1756, *ibid.*, 193 and *New Spiritual Magazine* i (1783) 20, 21.

²⁵ See Stout, op. cit., 202.

the Church of England...while remaining at its margins' and of an embattled relationship with the Church of England.²⁶

On 24th April 1739 Whitefield affirmed: 'For my own part I can see no reason for my leaving the Church, however I am treated by the corrupt members and ministers of it. I judge the state of a Church, not from the practice of its members, but its primitive and public constitutions; and so long as I think the Articles of the Church of England are agreeable to Scripture, I am resolved to preach them without either bigotry or party zeal.'²⁷ We note that in the space of five weeks in his *Journals* there are eight explicit references to having received or administered the Holy Sacrament.²⁸ On 20th May 1739 his *Journals* entry reads: 'Went with our brethren of the Fetter Lane Society to St. Paul's, and received the Holy Sacrament, as a testimony that we adhered to the Church of England.'²⁹

Furthermore, in a later letter to the Bishop of Bristol, he claimed: 'For near these twenty years last past, I have conscientiously defended her [the Church's] homilies and articles, and upon all occasions spoken well of

²⁶ Ibid., 70, 207.

²⁷ Murray (ed.), op. cit., 256.

²⁸ Jan 1, 13, 14, 21, 25, 28, Feb 4. See Murray, op. cit., 195-205.

²⁹ Ibid., 272.

her liturgy. Either of these, together with her discipline, I am so far from renouncing, much less throwing aside all regard to, that I earnestly pray for the due restoration of the one, and daily lament the wanton departure by too many from the other.³⁰ Yet, it has to be said, Whitefield was always ready to work for revival beyond the Church as well as within,³¹ and, like other Anglican Evangelicals, he 'took unprecedented liberties with time-honoured church traditions.'³² A particular example was his registering two of his prominent London preaching houses – Moorfields and Tottenham Court – as Independent meeting houses.³³

It is noteworthy that in 1749 Whitefield blamed himself for much of the prejudice of bishops and patrons of livings against younger clergy who joined the Evangelical movement: 'Alas, alas, in how many things I have judged and acted wrong ... I have hurt the cause I would defend, and also stirred up needless opposition.'³⁴

There is no doubt that Whitefield's emphasis on the necessity of the New Birth and the experience of grace in regeneration was novel in most London churches at that time, and his audiences at first received him with

³⁰ Cited by Stout, *op.cit.*, 202, 203.

³¹ See Royle, *op. cit.*, 302.

³² Noll, *op. cit.*, 94.

³³ See Noll, *op. cit.*, 152.

³⁴ Cited by Pollock, *Whitefield: The Evangelist* (Eastbourne, 2000), 247.

enthusiasm. However, Stout's views that 'the experience itself ruled supreme' and 'Instead of theological indoctrination being the foundation of spiritual experience, individual experience became the ground for a shared theology of revival'³⁵ are open to question.

Newton would later sum up Whitefield's preaching: 'Other ministers could, perhaps, preach the Gospel as clearly, and in general say the same things. But, I believe, no man living could say them in his way. Here I always thought him unequalled, and I hardly expect to see his equal while I live.'³⁶

Regarding the Wesley brothers, John Kent asserts they 'were not Anglican Evangelicals at all'.³⁷ It is indeed the case that their adherence to some aspects of Anglican order and polity, as generally understood in their time, was questionable; but on the basis of the definition of Evangelicalism we have given, and their own claims to be true Church of England men, it would be difficult to deny them the appellation 'Anglican Evangelical' at least until 1784 when J Wesley ordained T Coke as

³⁵ Stout, op.cit., 206.

³⁶ Ibid., 206, cited by Pollock, *Whitefield*, 199.

³⁷ Kent, *The Unacceptable Face: The Modern Church in the Eyes of the Historian* (1987), 85.

Superintendent or Bishop.³⁸ However, even towards the end of his life, famously, we find him saying: 'I live and die a member of the Church of England.' He remained convinced, first, that 'Methodists ought not to leave the Church ...our glorying has hitherto been not to be a separate body.'³⁹ And, second, 'I never had any desire of separating from the church. I have no such design now. I do not believe the Methodists in general design it when I am no more seen. I do and will do all that is in my power to prevent such an event.'⁴⁰ Furthermore, Wesley certainly did not see himself as deviating from the doctrines of the Church. Thus, on 13th September 1739, 'A serious clergyman desired to know in what points we differed from the Church of England. I answered "To the best of my knowledge in none." He asked, "In what points then, do you differ from other clergy of the Church of England?" I answered, "in none from that part of the clergy who adhere to the doctrine of the Church."⁴¹

³⁸ 'Wesley, John' in ODCC, 1727.

³⁹ F Baker (ed.), *Letters*, viii, 58.

⁴⁰ *Arminian Magazine*, April 1780.

⁴¹ *Journal*, ii, 274, 275.

However, evidently there was some change in Wesley's churchmanship. Although he steadfastly believed in the necessity of the church as a sacramental institution and the validity of its sacraments, his obedience to its governors was not complete. Where, in his view, episcopal pronouncements or actions were at variance with Scripture, he was unwilling to submit to them. F Baker writes of a reshuffling of his initial values in a different order of importance and the addition of some new ones. He began to see the Methodist societies as fulfilling the missionary role of the Church and performing sacramental functions.⁴²

From an early date both the Wesleys preached in London regularly. We learn from his *Journal* that in 1738 John Wesley preached at St Lawrence, Jewry on 7th May, on 9th May at Great St Helen ('to a very numerous congregation'); at St John, Wapping on Whit Sunday⁴³ and again on 8th October ('I suppose the last time') at St George's, Bloomsbury on 22nd May and again, for the last time, 22nd October; St Paul, Shadwell; on 24th September at St Anne and St Agnes and St John,

⁴² 'Wesley's Changing Churchmanship' in Baker, *Wesley and the Church of England* (2000), 159.

⁴³ *Journal*, i, 91,92.

Clerkenwell; on 29th October at All Hallows-on-the-Wall; on 15 November at St Antholin; on 17th December at St Swithin, London Stone; on 24th December at St Bartholomew the Great, Smithfield; Christ Church, Spitalfields and St Mary Matfellow, Whitechapel are also mentioned.⁴⁴ Further, in July 1738 Charles became 'temporary and unofficial curate of the Revd George Stonehouse, Vicar of Islington' and 'He also officiated in other London churches, including St Margaret's Westminster, St John's Clerkenwell, St Botolph's, St George's, St Clement's and St Helen's, Bishopsgate.'⁴⁵ Indeed, it was precisely because of these frequent opportunities in London that complaints were made and the brothers were duly summoned to give an account of themselves to the Bishop of London, Edmund Gibson, in November 1738. From this time onwards most London pulpits were closed to them.

That opposition to his ministry in London was growing became increasingly clear to John Wesley and this, perhaps, partly accounted for his hectic preaching schedule. The entry in his diary for 23 September 1738, reads: I preached 'the next day at St. Anne's, and twice at St. John's,

⁴⁴ *Journal*, i, 101-155. Further dates include: 8th October, 22nd May, 22nd October, 24th September, 29th October, 15th November, 17th December.

⁴⁵ A Brown-Lawson, *John Wesley and the Anglican Evangelicals of the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1994), 29.

Clerkenwell; so that I fear they will bear me no longer.⁴⁶ Again, for Sunday 5th November: 'I preached at St Botolph's, Bishopsgate; in the afternoon at Islington; and in the evening, to such a congregation as I never saw before, at St Clements in the Strand.'⁴⁷

At first the idea of open-air or field preaching was abhorrent to John Wesley – 'I could scarce reconcile myself at first to this strange way of preaching in the fields, ... having been all my life (till very lately) so tenacious on every point relating to decency and order, so that I should have thought the saving of souls almost a sin if it had not been done in a church.'⁴⁸ However, we know that on 14 June 1739 he was persuaded by Whitefield to preach at Blackheath 'where there were, I believe, twelve or fourteen thousand people'.⁴⁹ On Sunday 17 June, 1739, 'I preached, at seven, in Upper Moorfields, to (I believe) six or seven thousand people...At five I preached at Kennington Common to about fifteen thousand people...'⁵⁰ It appears to have been on 2 September that he

⁴⁶ *Journal*, i, 157.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 161.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 184.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 203.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 204.

preached 'at Kennington, to eight or ten thousand people'.⁵¹ In the same year he was at Fetter Lane on 12 September, and preaching again in London on 24 June 1740. On Sunday 12 September 1742 'I was desired to preach in the Great Gardens, lying between Whitechapel and Coverlet Fields, where I found a vast multitude gathered together' where the opposition took the form of a herd of cows being let loose among the crowd and 'whole showers of stones' were thrown, one of which struck Wesley between the eyes.⁵²

The growing extent and strength of hostility to the Wesleys can be gauged from Wesley's letter of 11 June 1747 'To Dr. Gibson, Bishop of London.'⁵³ The letter was a response to the Bishop's Visitation Charge for 1747 which appears not to have survived. Concerning the charges of Antinomian doctrine and the idea 'that Christ has done all and left nothing for us to do but believe', Wesley responds: 'These belong not to me. I am not unconcerned therein. I have earnestly opposed, but never did teach or embrace them.'⁵⁴ Wesley also repudiates the notion of 'the

⁵¹ Ibid. 222; See John Telford (ed), *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.* (1931), ii, 277-291.

⁵² Ibid. 399.

⁵³ Telford (ed.), *Letters of Wesley*, ii, 277-291.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 279.

making inward, secret, and sudden impulses the guides of their actions, resolutions, and designs', affirming 'In the whole compass of language there is not a proposition which less belongs to me than this.'⁵⁵ Wesley rebuts the idea that he teaches 'freedom from temptation' saying, I believe 'there is no such perfection in this life as implies an entire deliverance from manifold temptations.'⁵⁶

He left the bishop in no doubt about the strength of his feelings in his response to the charge of 'abusing the clergy'. He writes: 'I take an especial care (1) to speak nothing but the truth; (2) to speak this with all plainness; and (3) with love and in the spirit of meekness.'⁵⁷ His letter was considered to have had 'by every account, a great effect on that venerable prelate.'⁵⁸

Whereas Wesley was pleased, as opportunity arose, to minister to the aristocracy and gentry, 'the rich and noble', he nevertheless stated 'If I might choose, I should still (as I have done hitherto) "preach the gospel to the poor."⁵⁹ By contrast, Whitefield, when in London, under the patronage of the Countess of Huntingdon, was happy, as we shall see, to

⁵⁵ Ibid., 279.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 280.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 285.

⁵⁸ H Moore, *Life of Wesley* (1825), ii, 415.

⁵⁹ *Journal*, ii, 488.

preach to the upper classes, although not only to them. This is, perhaps, surprising in view of the fact that Whitefield was of a lower social rank than Wesley. He had been a servitor at Oxford.

With regard to the numbers of conversions in London resulting from their ministries, it is impossible to make any accurate estimate. Neither Whitefield nor Wesley give precise numbers. So, too, Whitefield, returning to London in 1738, at Fetter Lane (at this time still one of the Religious Societies attached to the Church of England), 'perceived God had greatly watered the seed sown by my ministry when last in London.' Also, at St. Helen's and at Islington, 'many who were awakened by my preaching a year ago, are now grown strong men in Christ.'⁶⁰ Again, Whitefield, returning in July 1739, exclaimed 'Blessed be God for what he has done here since I left London, by my honoured friend and fellow-labourer, Mr. Charles Wesley.'⁶¹ Much later, John Wesley does allude to real growth. At the Conference in 1777, in response to a report of decline of Methodist Societies, Wesley was adamant: 'They do not decrease in number; they continually increase: therefore they are not a fallen people.'⁶²

⁶⁰ Whitefield, *op. cit.*, 193.

⁶¹ *op. cit.*, 311.

⁶² Wesley, *Journal*, iv, 110.

The vast numbers of auditors in this early period might suggest larger numbers of conversions than were actually the case. Many responded negatively to the evangelists' message but undoubtedly some were receptive and lives were transformed. Whilst crowds seeking fairground entertainment or theatre were drawn to hear the preachers, not all stayed and fewer professed conversion. In any case, it is likely that some professions of 'conversion' proved later to be spurious. We know that Wesley's preaching tours concentrated on a triangle from London to Bristol and Newcastle; but we should note: 'He had least success in London, where churches and chapels of all denominations were competing in close proximity.'⁶³

What is clear is that, even when the estimates given in their Journals are treated with some caution, there can be no doubt about the widespread and powerful effect of their work. It is most unlikely that their ministries would have attracted as much attention and opposition, as was the case, if the impact had not been great.

The testimony of a hostile witness to their considerable influence was given by Dr Tobias Smollett (1721-1771). Wesley himself was 'a little surprised' at a passage in Dr. Smollett's *History of England* which reads

⁶³ Royle, op. cit., 303.

as follows: 'Imposture and fanaticism still hang upon the skirts of religion. Weak minds were seduced by the delusions of a superstition, styled Methodism, raised upon the affections of superior sanctity, and pretensions to divine illumination. Many thousands were infected with this enthusiasm, by the endeavours of a few obscure Preachers, such as Whitefield and the two Wesleys, who found means to lay the kingdom under contribution.'⁶⁴ Evidently the impact was sufficiently great for a secular historian of Smollett's prominence to inveigh against it, as did many of the clergy. Smollett lived in London (Downing Street in 1744 and for periods later) and had first-hand knowledge of what was going on.

Wesley was a man who unremittingly propagated his views. 'His extensive writings and abridgements gave him a role as a popular educator.'⁶⁵ It was not until 1754 that Wesley's *Notes on the New Testament*, with his four volumes of sermons were designated a doctrinal standard of Methodism but certainly some of these will have been read by early Evangelicals in London. Wesley 'published instalments [of his Journal] throughout his life.'⁶⁶

⁶⁴ xv (1761), 151, 152.

⁶⁵ 'Wesley, John' in ODCC, 1728.

⁶⁶ C Idle, *The Journal of John Wesley* (Oxford, 2003), 6.

It can, therefore, be affirmed with confidence that in London there was undoubtedly a new religious impulse, with a corresponding manifestation of evangelistic energy and evangelical growth, albeit not always steady or dramatic. The influence of Whitefield and the Wesleys was widespread, if not pervasive, and touched people from all ranks of society. However, notwithstanding their own professions of adherence to the Established Church, their direct impact on the Church of England in London may not have been as great or evident as some have imagined. Wesley's connexion of societies and preachers certainly enlarged and strengthened the Church of God; but it has to be said the Church of England in London was not noticeably stronger as a result of his ministry.⁶⁷ Stout speaks of Whitefield's 'anti-institutional bias that redefined his deepest understanding of the nature and meaning of religious assembly' and his having in mind 'an alternative religious vision that drove his ministry from the start and gained clarity as time went on.'⁶⁸ These tendencies would undoubtedly have aroused suspicion or fear, even among some Evangelicals like William Romaine.

⁶⁷ See Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England* (1970), 323.

⁶⁸ Stout, *op. cit.*, 202.

The London preaching ministries of both John Wesley and George Whitefield continued well after 1748. We know, for example, from John Wesley's *Journal* that he was preaching in London on Sunday 10th February 1751 ⁶⁹, that he was in London on Friday 20th August and Sunday 29th August 1762 (at the latter he partook of the Lord's Supper 'with my old opponent, Bishop Lavington'), at Wapping on Monday 21st February and at Spitalfields on Monday 28th February, and in London again on Saturday 1st October 1763. ⁷⁰ However, in spite of his Anglican orders, Wesley, like Whitefield, continued to be largely excluded from Anglican pulpits.

In 1739 George Whitefield wrote 'I see more and more the benefit of leaving written testimonies behind us ... They not only profit the present, but will also edify the future age.' No doubt it was largely this conviction which led Whitefield to publish his *Journals*. ⁷¹ There is no doubt that these were widely read, not least in and around London. Additionally and separately, some 64 of his sermons (44 of them preached before he was 25) were published. Although these have been

⁶⁹ L Tyerman (1871), iii, 512.

⁷⁰ See *Journal*. iii, 113, 130.

⁷¹ See Murray, op. cit., 31, 35.

much criticised, and have been undervalued,⁷² part of the appeal of Whitefield's writings is his avowed intention to be impartial and not to conceal his faults and failures.⁷³

We summarise by saying that in its very early days Anglican Evangelicalism in London owed much to both John Wesley and George Whitefield, even though, after their exclusion from the pulpits of the Established Church, a great deal of their preaching was in Society meetings or the open-air. Their contribution, therefore, should not be under-estimated. It is arguable that Whitefield's lasting influence in London, as elsewhere in England, flowed more through the Established Church than did Wesley's, nevertheless, in the metropolis, it was the enduring subliminal effect of their ministries which was the more significant. In consequence a new spiritual aspect to the religious ethos of the metropolis developed – a fresh awareness of an experiential religious dimension to life and a deepened sense of spiritual need. This would prove vitally important for London's Evangelical growth.

⁷² See Ryle, *op. cit.*, 48-55.

⁷³ See Murray, *op. cit.*, 35.

Selina Countess of Huntingdon (1707-1791)

A very significant factor in Whitefield's effectiveness, when in London, was the patronage of Selina Countess of Huntingdon. Lady Huntingdon had been influenced (c.1739) by her sister-in-law, Lady Margaret Hastings. A Harding describes her as "the instrument" of Lady Selina's conversion.¹ Lady Margaret Hastings had come to evangelical faith through the influence of the Revd. Benjamin Ingham (1712-1772) who himself had undergone an evangelical conversion in 1737. Lady Huntingdon's evangelical conversion appears to have taken place in July 1739 but may have been followed by further seeking as she stated her desire to 'undergoe every Thing to come to the true knowledge of my only Saviour.'² Lady Selina shortly became a member of the Fetter Lane Society. She was a woman with a forceful personality, strong Evangelical convictions (soon adopting definite Calvinistic views through her association with Whitefield) and eventually, after the death of her husband in 1746, of considerable wealth.

Lady Huntingdon's conversion and evangelical witness soon attracted attention in high society, although not always with favour. Soon after, she

¹ A Harding, *The Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion* (Oxford, 2003), 24.

² Letter to Thomas Barnard (1739) cited by Harding, op. cit., 26.

began her famous drawing-room gatherings in her London apartment and, later, in her Chelsea residence.³ According to Balleine 'No hostess in London was able to gather a more brilliant company of guests: the Prince of Wales and the Duke of Cumberland, Lord North and the Earl of Chatham, Horace Walpole and Bubb Doddington, Lord Chesterfield and Lord Bolingbrooke, the Duchess of Marlborough and Lady Suffolk, and indeed all the most illustrious men and women of the time used to meet in her drawing room to listen to her preachers ...'⁴ To this list Stout adds 'The Earl of Burlington, Lord Melcombe, the Earl of Aberdeen.'⁵ ACH Seymour, additionally, mentions the Earl of Bath, Lady Townshend, Lady Thanet and Lord St. John.⁶

For our study, the most important of her converts was the Earl of Dartmouth (c. 1755), the President of the Board of Trade and later Colonial Secretary. Another, whose conversion created something of a sensation in her own society, was David Stewart, who became Earl of

³ See PJ Lineham, 'Huntingdon, Selina' in DEB, i, 585.

⁴ Balleine, op. cit., 57.

⁵ Stout, op. cit., 214.

⁶ A Seymour, *The Life and Times of the Countess of Huntingdon* (1839), 97.

Buchan in 1767. He was to make a number of Evangelicals his chaplains. Yet another was Lady Gertrude Hotham. It appears that King George III recognised her value and had profound respect for her - 'I wish there was a Lady Huntingdon in every diocese in the Kingdom.'⁷ It should, however, be mentioned that some, such as the Duchess of Buckingham and Lady Suffolk (the celebrated beauty and mistress of George II) found the doctrine propounded deeply offensive.⁸ Walpole (1717-1797) wrote disparagingly in March 1749, but without specific reference to Lady Huntingdon, 'Methodism in the metropolis is more fashionable than anything but brag [a card game like poker], the women play very deep at both ...'⁹ Walpole was well known for his interest in gossip and spite¹⁰ and well acquainted with the London scene.

When George Whitefield returned from his second visit to America in 1748 he became the domestic chaplain to Lady Huntingdon. Being one of her favourite chaplains he was soon asked to preach in her London drawing room to a select circle of the nobility. Aristocratic hearers had already accompanied her to Whitefield's sermons in London churches a

⁷ Cited by *Christian Observer* (1857). See Elliott-Binns, *The Early Evangelicals* (1953), 142.

⁸ See Pollock, *Whitefield the Evangelist*, 239.

⁹ See Elliott-Binns, op. cit., 139 citing *Letters*, ii, 149.

¹⁰ See JA Cannon in OCBH (1997), 964.

decade earlier but this represented a new development in his ministry. This invitation was extended to him on a number of occasions.¹¹ Whitefield was able to write: 'Good Lady Huntingdon goes on acting the part of a mother in Israel. Her house is indeed a Bethel. We have the sacrament every morning, heavenly conversation all day, and preach at night. For a day or two she has had five clergymen under her roof.'¹² As a peeress, Lady Huntingdon believed she could have as many private chaplains as she pleased and increasingly used her right to sponsor Evangelical Anglican services. It was at this time that William Romaine (1714-1795) became one of her chaplains, until 1781.

Between his visits to America, Whitefield was in Britain 1748-1751, 1752-1754, 1755-1763, and 1755-1769. High rank certainly counted for much in these times but, in Lady Huntingdon's drawing room, Whitefield's eloquence meant that he was usually well received by the nobility. Thus, in response to his preaching in her London drawing room (probably in the first period), we read: "In the morning the Earl of Chesterfield was present." and "In the evening Viscount Bolingbroke [was present]. All behaved quite well and were in some degree affected."

¹¹ See Harding, op. cit., 38.

¹² Cited by Balleine from Tyerman's *Life of Whitefield* (1876), ii, 305.

Lord Chesterfield crossed the room and said with much good breeding: "Sir, I will not tell you what I shall tell others, how I approve of you." He conversed with much affability for quite a time.¹³ Bolingbroke also expressed genuine admiration for Whitefield to Lady Huntingdon but remained a Deist to his death.¹⁴

Whitefield converted relatively few noblemen, but many noblewomen flocked to hear his message. Included among these "lasting converts" Whitefield counted Lady Fanny Shirley, Lady Anne Frankland, Lady Gertrude Hotham, the Countess DeLitz, Lady Rockingham, Lady Hyndford, Lady Chesterfield, and Lady Betty Germain.¹⁵ Countess DeLitz also opened her home to Whitefield's preaching.¹⁵ At any rate, Lady Hotham (1697-1775) 'grew to be one of Whitefield's strongest converts among "the upper rank of society", and often invited him to preach and administer the sacrament at her mansion on Campden Hill just beyond Kensington Palace.'¹⁶

¹³ Cited by Pollock, *Whitefield: The Evangelist*, 236. Remark undated.

¹⁴ See Elliott-Binns, op. cit., 138, 139. Date of letter not given.

¹⁵ See Stout, op. cit., 214.

¹⁶ Cited by Pollock, *Whitefield*, 236.

Another leading Evangelical who, for a short time, left his mark on London Evangelicalism was John William Fletcher (1729 ? –1787). He ‘preached mostly in those parts of London in which Huguenots lived, in West Street Chapel [1757], and probably also in Spitalfields.’¹⁷ In 1760 he also worked closely with John Wesley, ‘serving his societies in London, as well as the Countess’s [Lady Huntingdon’s] house congregation in Paddington.’ This he did for over half a year.¹⁸

A further major contribution which Lady Huntingdon made to Evangelical work in London was generously to help maintain Whitefield’s buildings, Moorfields, Tottenham Court Chapel and others at which he preached more occasionally such as Long Acre and Spa Fields.¹⁹ Perhaps surprisingly, when Whitefield died in 1770, he did not bequeath his two London chapels to Lady Huntingdon but to two London merchants, Daniel West and Robert Keen. Nevertheless, even after her secession in 1782 most of her chapels continued to use the Book of Common Prayer and her college still welcomed future Anglican ordinands.²⁰

¹⁷ Streiff, op. cit., 63.

¹⁸ Ibid., 63.

¹⁹ See Belden, op. cit., 171, 172.

²⁰ See E Welch, *Spiritual Pilgrim* (Cardiff, 1995), 148.

Later, in 1779, Lady Huntingdon opened the very large chapel in Spa Fields. Originally the building was a large theatre surrounded by pleasure gardens and had been opened in Clerkenwell for Sunday entertainments. It had been purchased by Lord Dartmouth, with others, with a view to using it for mission services, and then presented to Lady Huntingdon in order that her chaplains might officiate in it. This, however, was clearly on an entirely different footing from a chapel in a private house. 'The ministrations of a private chaplain become *public* if persons not constituting part of the household are admitted, and in such cases the services must be conducted in strict accordance with the law.'²¹ It provoked the local vicar to take legal action. The matter came before the consistorial court of the diocese of London and her claim to an unlimited right to build chapels was rejected. Never a woman to accept defeat lightly, in order to avoid the penalties of a breach of the Conventicle Act of 1670, Lady Huntingdon promptly registered her chapels as dissenting places of worship under the Toleration Act of 1688 (12 January 1782), Whitefield having died in 1770. Until 1782 it had been her custom to invite her chaplains in rotation to minister for a month at a time while she supplied a substitute for their own parishes. All her chaplains now resigned their chaplains' scarves and she and her lay preachers became a

²¹ *Protestant Dictionary* (1904), 98, 99.

separate body known still as 'Lady Huntingdon's Connexion.' From the time of her secession, the establishing of her own network of societies seems to have become her priority.

There were two Anglican clergymen 'who associated themselves full-time with Lady Huntingdon in the 1770s', but who later seceded (c.1783) - William Taylor and Thomas Wills.²² Of the seven chapels which were the personal property of Lady Huntingdon at the time of her death in 1791, only three could be described as 'London' chapels - Spa Fields, Sion, and Mulberry Gardens.

For Lady Huntingdon 'Loyalty to the Church of England does not seem to have been a fundamental principle'²³ and her approach to the Church of England was essentially pragmatic. While she had no particular wish to leave the Church or to break its rules, she would use irregular methods if her work required it.²⁴ Nevertheless, as Tyerman averred: 'Wesley created a great Church outside the Church of England. Whitefield and the Countess of Huntingdon were pre-eminently employed in improving the

²² See Harding, op. cit., 82.

²³ Harding, op. cit., 296.

²⁴ Op. cit., 323, cited by Belden, op.cit., 176 from Tyerman, *The Life of the Rev. George Whitefield* (1876), ii, 192.

Church of England itself.’²⁵ Her importance for the early leadership of Anglican Evangelicalism and her work and witness have been described as among ‘the decisive engines of the movement’ particularly in London.²⁶ However, it ought to be pointed out that Bishop Beilby Porteus did not see the Countess as an Anglican: ‘Lady Huntingdon though a pious woman was unquestionably not a member of the Church of England, but what is strictly and properly called a Methodist, professing the doctrine of one of the first founders of Methodism George Whitefield.’²⁷

Some further idea of the extent of her networking influence is conveyed by Charles Smyth with reference to John Berridge (1716-1793) of Everton. During a stay with Lady Huntingdon, he ‘preached two or three times in the city churches, assisted by Mr Whitefield and Messrs Wesley, and expounded almost every morning and evening at Lady Huntingdon’s besides his occasional lectures at Lady Gertrude Hotham’s, in New Norfolk-street, Grosvenor-square, and Lady Fanny Shirley’s, in South

²⁵ Cited by Belden, *op. cit.*, 176 from Tyerman, *op. cit.*, ii, 192.

²⁶ See Noll, *op. cit.*, 153.

²⁷ LPL MS 2104, Letter August 1808 re Dr Draper.

Audley-street.²⁸ Berridge regularly assisted at Whitefield's Tabernacle and at the Tottenham Court Chapel whenever he went up to London for a period between Christmas and Easter.

A major part of her contribution to London Evangelicalism was as helper, encourager and sustainer – mainly through the influence of her high rank as a peeress, her financial wealth and ecclesiastical patronage, the use of her London home, her organisational ability, her building of chapels, and her practical concern for training of effective evangelical ministers . ‘She was not alone within the aristocracy in taking seriously the implications of her faith, but she had blazed a trail and was not deterred by the prospect of mockery or derision.’²⁹ Her role in the rise of Anglican Evangelicalism in London can truly be described as pivotal.

It would be true to say, particularly in respect of London until his death in 1770, that there was a mutuality of dependence of the Countess and Whitefield regarding their effectiveness in evangelical work. While the Countess made full use of Whitefield's extraordinary preaching gift; Whitefield was always glad of the opportunities which the Countess

²⁸ *Simeon and Church Order* (Cambridge, 1940), 180, citing Berridge's *Works*.

²⁹ Harding, *op.cit.*, 370.

provided in her homes and grateful for her generous financial support for his chapels and other work. In this particular regard one might even speak of a symbiosis.

William Romaine (1714-1795)

William Romaine had been Lady Huntingdon's senior chaplain and it was to her that he owed his appointment to St Anne's, Blackfriars. His chief work in connection with the Evangelical revival was in London. The historian Charles Hole goes so far as to say: 'The most remarkable man of the movement was probably William Romaine (1714-1795)'.³⁰

Romaine matriculated from Hart Hall (now Hertford College), Oxford, in 1731 before migrating to Christ Church and graduating BA in 1734. He 'pursued his interests in oratory and in ancient languages, especially Hebrew in which he became markedly proficient.'³¹ Romaine's scholarship was soon to be recognised by his publication of Marios de Calasio's *Hebrew dictionary and concordance* (4 volumes) 1747-1749.³² His strength of character was apparent in his controversy with the

³⁰ Hole, op. cit., 376.

³¹ AS Wood, 'Romaine, William' in DEB, ii, 953.

³² See Wood, op. cit., 954.

formidable William Warburton in 1739 over the latter's views on the future life in the Old Testament ³³ and his letter to Dr Randolph regarding the latter's refusal to him of the pulpit.³⁴ Romaine's chief literary contribution was his trilogy which originally appeared as *The Life of Faith* (1763), *The Walk of Faith* (1771) and *The Triumph of Faith* (1795). These were published in a single volume, with a memoir, in 1824, which became a classic. These works are characterized by a profundity and depth typical of the Puritan divines, whose standpoint, style and language they share. ³⁵ They were widely influential and are indicative of his robust Evangelicalism. G Rupp speaks of Romaine's works as 'a contribution to the literature of devotion.' ³⁶

After ordination in 1736 he served as curate at Banstead, Surrey, in 1739. He was shortly appointed chaplain to the Lord Mayor in 1741 when Sir Daniel Lambert was elected to that office - a position which afforded him the opportunity to preach at St Paul's Cathedral. However, his Evangelical conversion, the circumstances of which are not known, did

³³ See Wood, op. cit., 953, 954.

³⁴ See WB Cadogan, *Works of the late Reverend William Romaine, A.M.*, vii, 14.

³⁵ See Elliott-Binns, op. cit., 402.

³⁶ Op. cit., 484.

not take place until c.1748 and it was in this year that he was elected to a lectureship at St Botolph's, Billingsgate.³⁷ The following year he secured the afternoon lectureship of St Dunstan's-in-the-West in Fleet Street. Elliott-Binns regards this position 'as one of great importance owing to the nearness of the church to the Law Courts.'³⁸ At St Dunstan's he drew large crowds in spite of opposition and the church soon became the centre of London Evangelicalism.

In 1750 he was presented with a further opportunity for preaching when engaged as assistant morning preacher at the fashionable St George's, Hanover Square in the West End.³⁹ He was to become recognised as 'the capital's principal preacher'⁴⁰ and people came to see David Garrick (1717-1779) act and hear Romaine preach. However, on the appointment of a new incumbent at St George's, Hanover Square, he was dismissed as a morning preacher and accepted a curacy at St Olave's, Southwark (1756), whilst retaining his lectureship at St Dunstan's.⁴¹ The influence of

³⁷ See Elliott-Binns, op.cit., 164.

³⁸ Ibid., 164.

³⁹ See Wood, op. cit., 954.

⁴⁰ Wood, op. cit., 954.

⁴¹ See Elliott-Binns, op. cit., 165, 166.

his evangelical preaching was further extended through his additional appointment as curate and morning preacher and he was given similar responsibility at St Bartholomew the Great (1759-1761).

Romaine was eventually recommended by Lady Huntingdon for the living of St Andrew's, Blackfriars, annexed to St Andrew's-by-the-Wardrobe, but, because of a lengthy dispute, was not instituted until 1766. He was then, for 14 years, the only beneficed evangelical incumbent in the city and was regarded by JH Overton as 'the strongest figure among the eighteenth century evangelicals.'⁴²

His appointment to St Anne's, Blackfriars, is of particular interest. The parish had become vacant in 1764 and some parishioners expressed a

⁴² See JH Overton, *The Evangelical Revival* (1898), 64-68.

desire to elect Romaine to the incumbency. Romaine initially refused to canvas: 'I could not see how this could promote the glory of God. How can it be for the honour of Jesus that his ministers, who have renounced fame, riches, and ease, should be most anxious and earnest in the pursuit of those very things which they have renounced?'⁴³ Eventually he submitted and was elected but, on account of opposition, the matter was brought to Chancery and Lord Henley eventually ruled in favour of Romaine in February 1766. In all this may be seen something of Romaine's integrity and sincerity. He once wrote: 'It is my Master's will, and I submit. I can see nothing before me, so long as the breath is in my body, but war – and that with unreasonable men – a divided parish, an angry clergy, a wicked Sodom, and a wicked world.'

An indication of Romaine's churchmanship is given in his 'practice in holding a weekly Communion.'⁴⁴ It has been remarked that 'Romaine might be styled an evangelical Anglican, while John Wesley was an Anglican evangelical.'⁴⁵ Whether this characterisation is fair or not, it is certainly the case that Romaine was a committed churchman and found his 'central doctrinal identity in the forms and traditions of the Church of

⁴³ Cited by Elliott-Binns, *op.cit.*, 167, as also the quotation which follows.

⁴⁴ See A Pollard, 'Goode, William' in *DEB*, i, 455.

⁴⁵ M Noll, *op. cit.*, 116.

England'⁴⁶ Nevertheless, he worked closely with the Countess of Huntingdon with her more pragmatic, albeit sincere, adherence to the Established Church (until she felt compelled to secede), as he did also with the Wesley brothers.

As one of Lady Huntingdon's chaplains, Romaine also undertook itinerant evangelical ministry for her but, as Harding observes, 'almost always in churches as he was opposed to field preaching'.⁴⁷ His links with the countess also extended to preaching at her house and, 'in the next phase of her work, at the principal chapels of the Connexion during the 1760s and 1770s.'⁴⁸ Romaine shared the determined Calvinism of Whitefield - Gladstone described him as professing 'high Calvinism, or of leaning more or less towards it'.⁴⁹ It was, no doubt, partly this which commended him to Lady Huntingdon who had been in regular correspondence with Whitefield since 1744.⁵⁰ Her support for the Calvinist cause was to become intense.⁵¹ Nevertheless, like the Countess,

⁴⁶ M Noll, op. cit., 115.

⁴⁷ Harding, op. cit., 42.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 42.

⁴⁹ *British Quarterly Review*, 1st July 1879.

⁵⁰ See Harding, op. cit., 32.

⁵¹ See PJ Lineham, 'Huntingdon, Selina' in DEB, i, 585, 586.

he maintained friendly relations with the Wesleys and sought to avoid controversy with evangelical Arminians.⁵²

Evidently, Romaine's Calvinism did not deter large numbers from attending his preaching. At any rate, he was held in high regard by London Evangelicals. It is difficult to decide who had the greater influence on whom. Lady Huntingdon was certainly well informed on many theological matters but few would dispute that Romaine was theologically more perceptive and learned. He would not have been easily swayed in matters of doctrine by her. Furthermore, he showed later that he could resist her persuasive influence by refusing to have anything to do with her plans for Spa Fields which led to his removal as one of her chaplains shortly before 1779. In fact, there is no evidence of his preaching for her after 1773 and there was a definite cooling of his relations with her Connexion at about that time.

⁵² See Wood in DEB, ii, 954.

In his brief '*The Life of the Rev. William Romaine, A.M.*', Cadogan observes of his sermons for charity in many London churches that they were 'sermons, which had been the means not only of spreading the gospel, but of proving its efficacy; for whatever may be ignorantly said against it as inimical to good works, more good has been done by it, and larger collections produced by the preaching of it, than by all the mere essays upon charity put together.'⁵³

Some idea of his influence is conveyed by the shrewd comment of the Earl of Northampton: 'If the power to attract be imputed as a matter of admiration to Garrick, why should it be urged as a crime against

⁵³ W Romaine, *Works*, op. cit., 13.

⁵⁴ Elliott-Binns, op. cit., 16.

Romaine?'⁵⁴ People did indeed come in from the provinces to see Garrick act and hear Romaine preach. It is true, as Hole states: 'He was a man of culture and learning, and although he had not the gifts which make for wide popularity, his earnestness and zeal attracted numbers to him.'⁵⁵ This statement strongly suggests that he did not have the same warm-hearted personality and pastoral gifts that Newton, as we shall note, possessed.

The Earlier Predestinarian Dispute

The predestinarian issue, of course, was not novel, having been prominent at the time of Augustine of Hippo and, later, of John Calvin. Whitefield followed the Calvinist tradition of mainstream Puritanism (John Goodwin is usually considered the only Arminian Puritan of ability) in contrast to the Wesley brothers who followed the Arminian tradition of the High Churchmanship of their upbringing.

This is not the place to attempt a full exposition of either Calvin's teaching on this point or the views of later Calvinists. It will suffice to say that the Calvinists of the 18th century wished to stress God's absolute

⁵⁵ Hole, *op. cit.*, 377.

authority and initiative in the matter of man's salvation. They wished to emphasise the absolute necessity and working of God's free and sovereign grace in salvation. The notion of predestination seemed the most suitable to convey this and the use of the term 'election' was deemed appropriate. All this, of course, had been hotly disputed by Arminius (1560-1609). Put in simple terms, 'Where the Arminian says, "I owe my election to my faith", the Calvinist says, "I owe my faith to my election"'.⁵⁶ It has been doubted whether the teaching of Arminius had a strong and direct influence on the Wesleys but there is no doubt John Wesley found the idea repugnant that anyone should be damned for sins that, since grace had been withheld from him, he could not have avoided.

The problem which arose, from Whitefield's point of view, was that Wesley still allowed man the opportunity to refuse God's gift being offered. In the last analysis it was man's choice, not God's, which was determinative, implying that Jesus could have died in vain. From Wesley's point of view the problem was that the notion of predestination could lead in theory to antinomianism. If it was certain that the elect would be saved, it could be argued, there was no longer any necessity for the Christian to strive for righteousness. Indeed, some Calvinists were not committed to evangelism.

⁵⁶ See Packer, *op. cit.*, 171.

The issue became extremely contentious and led eventually to the parting of the ways of Whitefield and the Wesleys on 4 April 1741. Pollock may be right in saying the differences were 'rendered more acute by personal weakness – the imperiousness of Wesley, the impulsiveness of Whitefield – and by the factiousness of followers.' but the rupture was real and had lasting consequences. The fact that there was a personal reconciliation in 1742 ⁵⁷ did not mean their doctrinal differences were resolved. Noll remarks: 'Although the divisive issues were not new, concentration during times of revival and awakening on the vitality of divine grace gave these issues a distinctive eighteenth-century colouring.' ⁵⁸ It should be stressed that Whitefield, with all his firm belief in the sovereignty of God, never felt any embarrassment in 'offering' the Gospel to all. Indeed, he wrote to Wesley: 'Though I hold to particular election, yet I offer Jesus freely to every individual soul.'⁵⁹ This is confirmed by reference to Whitefield's *Journals*. Thus, on 28th January 1739 at Crooked Lane: 'I offered Christ freely to sinners, and many, I believe, were truly pricked to the heart.'; on 6th February 1739 at St. Helen's: 'I waxed warm in Spirit,

⁵⁷ Pollock, *Whitefield the Evangelist*, 184.

⁵⁸ Noll, op.cit., 256.

⁵⁹ Letter to Wesley, 10th October 1741, cited by Noll, op. cit., 257.

and offered Jesus Christ freely to all who would lay hold on Him by faith.'; on 12th May 1739 at Kennington: 'I offered Jesus Christ to all who could apply Him to their hearts by faith. Oh that all would embrace Him!.' ⁶⁰ For Whitefield the issue was never recondite or peripheral. It was not about some theological nicety but was central and pivotal. Far from being a deterrent to offering Christ freely, predestination, as he understood it, was in fact a primary motive for doing so.

In England, possibly the most significant person to be influenced by Whitefield's Calvinism was the Countess of Huntingdon. The change in her theological understanding has been well described by A Harding. When she first met Whitefield in February 1742 she was a staunch defender of the Wesleys, refusing to be swayed by Whitefield's opinion that she was herself one of the elect. It was her view that *not* believing in election meant that she was the more completely dependent on Christ to save her from her sin. In April 1742, for example, she told Wesley: 'you are the only one with your Brother that has ever showed the riches of the Gospel.'⁶¹ However, from early 1744 she regularly corresponded with Whitefield, and this may have started her move to Calvinism. ⁶² At any rate, in 1748 Whitefield became one of her chaplains ... demonstrating

⁶⁰ *Journals*, 203, 206, 264.

⁶¹ See Harding, *op. cit.*, 31.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 32.

her transition to Calvinism which was to be permanent.⁶³ Nevertheless, this did not mean a complete break with Wesley who preached in her home early in 1749. However, it undoubtedly led to her distinctive role in influencing the course of the Revival.⁶⁴ She not only persuaded Whitefield in 1749 to give up his leadership role of the Calvinistic wing of the Revival – possibly with a view to increasing his influence within the Church of England, rather than as the leader of a sect - but also had a part in the attempted union in 1750.⁶⁵

It is generally agreed that the great majority of London Evangelicals were on the Calvinist side, but a Calvinism of a moderate kind. One of the most influential Evangelical writers of the time was James Hervey (1714-1758) who had been a reader of John Wesley's writings. Ordained in 1736, he entered later into correspondence with Whitefield c.1740-1743 and adopted Calvinistic views. His first book *Meditations among the Tombs* (1746), ran through twenty editions in a very few years, and his next *Theron and Aspasio* (1755), a defence of Calvinism, was highly

⁶³ Ibid., 38.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 38, 39.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 40.

influential and almost as popular.⁶⁶ Significantly, Thomas Scott later acknowledged his debt to *Theron and Aspasio*⁶⁷ and Edward Bickersteth wrote of these dialogues: 'at least I have reason to bless God for them, as they opened my mind on the nature of religion.'⁶⁸ He also wrote *Reflections on a Flower Garden* and had a long correspondence with Lady Fanny Shirley.⁶⁹

Elliott-Binns considers that Hervey, in spite of his controversy with Wesley, "never taught or held, the doctrine of unconditional election and reprobation."⁷⁰ Henry Venn, who was intimate with Whitefield, J Wesley and Lady Huntingdon, moved to a moderate Calvinism in the 1750s; he wrote in 1772: 'As to Calvinism, you know I am a moderate' and 'Though the doctrines of Grace are clear to me, I am still no friend of High Calvinism ...Predestination cancels the necessity of any change, and

⁶⁶ Balleine, op. cit., 98.

⁶⁷ Downer, *Thomas Scott* (1909), 42.

⁶⁸ TR Birks, *A Memoir of the Rev Edward Bickersteth* (1851), i, 546.

⁶⁹ See Hole, op. cit., 374.

⁷⁰ Elliott-Binns, *The Early Evangelicals* (1953), 196. Gladstone, however, classifies him with Romaine. See op. cit., 4.

dispenses at once with all duty”⁷¹ The latter point would have been repudiated by most 18th century Calvinists but it serves to demonstrate the concern of some beside Arminians.

Evangelical Responses to exclusion from London Incumbencies

We have seen the importance of Whitefield (especially through his tabernacle at Moorfields) and the Wesleys (especially through the chapel at Tottenham Court Road) for the origins of Evangelicalism in London. However, it soon became apparent that something more than itinerant evangelism was needed if Evangelicalism was to grow in the capital city. However, at this stage it was virtually impossible for Evangelicals to obtain benefices with a freehold in London. There were several reasons for this.

In the first place there was a general antipathy towards Evangelicals because they were commonly perceived to be Methodists. This term had become opprobrious and carried with it the implication that they were ‘enthusiasts’. The general abhorrence of enthusiasm was perhaps given clearest expression in the famous statement sometimes attributed to Bishop Joseph Butler (1692-1752) as addressed to Wesley on 16 August

⁷¹ Cited by J Venn, *The Life of the Late Henry Venn* (1835), 33, 34.

1739: 'Sir, the pretending to extraordinary revelations and gifts of the Holy Ghost is a horrid thing, a very horrid thing!'¹ It should, however, be noted that Butler himself was well aware of 'the contrary extreme to enthusiasm under the notion of a reasonable religion; so very reasonable as to have nothing to do with the heart and affections ...'² In that age of cold decorum in the pulpit any kind of enthusiasm was regarded as fanaticism.

Secondly, there was a social impediment to the appointment of Evangelicals to parishes in London. Viviane Barrie, in an essay based on a study of the diocese of London between 1714 and 1800, concludes that '37.8% of the 500 clergymen [randomly selected] came from the gentry but the sons of the clergy were almost as numerous – 35.4%.³ However, Barrie adds 'But though these categories were clearly dominant, the importance of the lower orders should not be forgotten: '19.4% still registered as plebeians, demonstrating that the Church continued to recruit people of humble origins.' and, further, 'The social origins of the

¹ Cited by N Curnock (ed.), *The Journal of the Revd. John Wesley*, (1938), ii. 256, 257 where the conversation is included as f.n.

² J Butler, *Works*, ii, 194, cited by Elliott-Binns, op.cit., 185.

³ Barrie, 'The Church of England in the Diocese of London' in Gregory and Chamberlain (eds), op. cit., 57.

clergy underwent a notable change in the eighteenth century’⁴ Thus, Evangelicals, *qua* Evangelicals, were not barred, but they did often encounter social obstacles.

An Evangelical who did gain preferment was Thomas Jones (1729-1762). After graduation at King’s College, Cambridge, in 1751 Jones was appointed to the Collegiate Church of St Saviour, Southwark, 1753, and, after popular election, was nominated as one of the two chaplains of the Bishop of London (Thomas Sherlock). However, it appears that his conversion did not occur until 1754 after contact with Martin Madan (1726-1790), William Romaine and Lady Huntingdon. He soon joined Whitefield and Wesley in preaching in Lady Huntingdon’s Park Street residence and was also in demand in London pulpits for charity sermons.⁵ He became well-known for his ‘uncompromising fidelity to evangelical truth.’⁶

⁴ Ibid., 57.

⁵ See Wood, ‘Jones, Thomas’ in DEB, i, 625.

⁶ Wood, loc. cit.

Thirdly, and to some extent related to this, from the data available Barrie notes that 'by the eighteenth century all of the personnel of the diocese held at least one degree (except occasionally curates)'.⁷ Clearly, if this situation had been maintained consistently a man of the calibre of John Newton could never have been beneficed in the diocese. We note the comment in the *Christian Observer* as late 1818 that it was 'all but impossible for non-university men to obtain ordination in southern dioceses'.⁸ What is more, there was much hostility and prejudice towards Evangelicals in the universities. The case of the six undergraduates of St Edmund Hall who were expelled from Oxford in 1768 demonstrates this. Consorting with reputed Methodists, such as Mr. Venn, Mr. Newton, and Mr. Fletcher, was given as one reason. Erasmus Middleton did later serve curacies with Romaine and Cadogan, and also had lectureships at St Benet's, Gracechurch Street and St Helen's, Bishopgate. He became well known through his *Biographica Evangelica*.⁹

⁷ Barrie, op. cit., 57.

⁸ WJC Irvine, *Doctrine and Diplomacy: Some aspects of the Life and Thought of the Anglican Evangelical Clergy, 1797-1837*, PhD thesis (Cambridge, 1979), CUL, MS 11099, 159.

⁹ See Elliott-Binns, op. cit., 354 ff.

We now explore some of the ways in which Evangelicals sought to overcome these difficulties.

Lectureships

We have already noted the importance of lectureships in the ministry of Romaine before taking up his incumbency in 1766. For Evangelicals lectureships continued to be one of the few means of influence in London.

Lectureships appear to have originated in Puritan times. 'The lectureships were preaching stations set up voluntarily, and they permitted the occupants to escape the necessity of reading the required service.'¹⁰ Nevertheless, efforts were made to see that they used the Book of Common Prayer.¹¹ It is important to note that the lecturer's financial support came 'from other than normal Ecclesiastical funds – e.g. directly from parishioners, a corporation, or a nobleman.'¹²

The system largely was dealt its death-blow by the Act of Uniformity in 1662, which required exclusive use of the Book of Common Prayer and all ministers to give public assent to the act. Yet some lectureships

¹⁰ WS Hudson, 'Puritanism' in EB, xviii, 779.

¹¹ See P McGrath, *Papists and Puritans under Elizabeth I* (1967), 155.

¹² 'Lecturer' in NIDCC, 588.

remained, and it was these that the early Evangelicals in particular sought to exploit.¹³ Balleine lists eighteen London lectureships held by twelve different Evangelicals in the eighteenth century.¹⁴

In his treatment of this topic DB Hindmarsh.¹⁵ states: 'Normally elected by the vestry, these lecturers possessed an authority independent of the incumbent of the church, with whom they were sometimes in conflict. But once licensed, they seldom came under the scrutiny of their ordinary.'¹⁶ Henry Venn (1724-1797) was one whose subsequent Evangelical development was almost certainly influenced by accepting such lectureships. Thus, during his curacy at Clapham 1754-1759: 'four times a week he rode into London to lecture at St. Antholin's, St. Alban's, Wood Street, and St. Swithin's, London Stone.'¹⁷ WJ Clyde Ervine describes these years as 'a period of theological sifting' when 'Venn moved toward a more positive evangelicalism.'¹⁸ Lady Huntingdon and George Whitefield appear to have been influential in this.

¹³ See 'Lecturers' in ODCC, 963.

¹⁴ Balleine, op.cit., 62, 63.

¹⁵ Hindmarsh, op. cit., 291 ff.

¹⁶ Hindmarsh, op. cit., 291, 293.

¹⁷ Balleine, op. cit., 55.

¹⁸ DEB, ii, 1137.

Some indication of the threat these lectureships were perceived to pose, and of the hostility they aroused, is conveyed by an earlier printed notice entitled 'To the Beneficed Clergy of the Diocese of London, the Humble Address of their (as yet uninfected) Parishioners' (1759).¹⁹ Hindmarsh avers 'The purpose of the notice was to refuse evangelical lecturers – "irregular Teachers", "utter Enemies of Decency and Order", "Idols of the Populace", and so on – access to pulpits by more strictly adhering to the Canons respecting the licensing of preachers.'²⁰

Proprietary Chapels

Notwithstanding the invaluable contribution of Evangelical chaplaincies and lectureships to the early growth of Evangelicalism in London, there were two major problems which these generally presented. One was the lack of security of tenure for those appointed to such 'stations of usefulness' - the appointee could be dismissed for fairly trivial reasons. The other had to do with the lack of guaranteed Evangelical succession upon the appointee's resignation or death.

¹⁹ Preserved in the BL, cited by Hindmarsh, *op.cit.*, 292, 293.

²⁰ *op. cit.*, 293.

Thus it was that Evangelicals began to make increasing use of Proprietary Chapels. In the Church of England these comprised any chapel built by subscription and maintained by private individuals, without constitutional existence or parochial rights. Such chapels were seldom episcopally consecrated, though their ministers were normally granted episcopal licences (revocable absolutely at the bishop's will) which could only be issued with the consent of the incumbent of the parish. Such chapels were established mainly in fashionable areas and were commonly supported by pew rents, which were often high.²¹ Usually the Bishops allowed them to be built, as a simple way of dealing with the increase of the population, at a time when the law put great obstacles in the way of forming fresh parishes.²² It appears the lay proprietors were always allowed to choose their own minister, and thus they now began frequently to select Evangelical clergy. Very soon these chapels became strongholds of the Evangelical teaching.²³ We note that since these chapels were generally intended for those who could pay pew rents, no provision was made for the less affluent classes.²⁴ Some proprietary chapels were founded by aristocratic families and they are also often associated with the Countess of Huntingdon.

²¹ See 'proprietary chapel' in ODCC, 1337.

²² See Balleine, *op. cit.*, 61.

²³ See *ibid.*, 61.

²⁴ See Elliott-Binns, *op. cit.*, 241.

Two of the London chapels of our period were founded with a distinct philanthropic involvement. Thus, the Foundling Chapel was part of the Foundling Hospital which housed young children. It opened originally in Hatton Garden in 1741 and moved to Coram's Field in 1753. However, the most famous chapel in the early years of the Evangelical movement was that attached to the Lock Hospital at the corner of Chapel Street, near Hyde Park. Certainly it became the chief representative of Evangelicalism in the fashionable West End.²⁵ It was originally intended for the treatment of venereal disease.²⁶ Although the Lock Hospital was founded in 1746, the chapel was not built until 1761 and was handed over to the hospital governors in 1764 free of debt and producing £1,000 per year from pew rents (the seats were let at one-and-a-half guineas a year)²⁷ It had a seating capacity for 800 people.

The founder, and also the first chaplain, was Martin Madan (1762-1790). He had been a barrister and had been converted when, intending to caricature John Wesley, he heard him preach. He took orders ('apparently on the suggestion of Lady Huntingdon, but with the encouragement of Romaine and others.'²⁸) and had then been appointed at All Hallows, Lombard Street

²⁵ See *ibid.*, 241.

²⁶ See A Pomfret, *op. cit.*, 38.

²⁷ See *ibid.*, 38.

²⁸ Elliott-Binns, *op. cit.*, 242.

(1750). Later, he moved to be chaplain of the Lock Hospital where his preaching was so popular that the new chapel was built.’²⁹ Madan was ‘a man of means and also of some learning – he knew the Scriptures in the original’ and was ‘a most important convert to the movement.’ His appearance and musical voice combined to make him a very attractive preacher.³⁰ In 1760 he published his *Collection of Psalms and Hymns*.³¹ However, although his writings were prolific, he is often remembered for his notorious *Thelyphthora, or a Treatise on Female Ruin* (1780) in which he appeared to advocate polygamy as a remedy for prostitution. This work arose out of his social concern and labours with prostitutes. During Madan’s ministry at the Lock Chapel, Thomas Haweis (1734-1820) was for a time Assistant Chaplain. He was a very eloquent preacher. Newton is said to have ‘declared that Haweis’s preaching sounded throughout the countryside like the report of a canon.’³² His extensive writings included *The Communicant’s Spiritual Companion* (1763) but he is probably best known for his comprehensive Bible commentary.³³

Another of Madan’s assistants at the Lock Hospital, appointed c.1772, was CE de Coetlogon (1746-1820). He was later to become Lord Mayor’s

²⁹ See Pollard, ‘Madan, Martin’ in DEB, ii, 733.

³⁰ Elliott-Binns, op. cit., 242.

³¹ 13th edition 1794.

³² Wood, ‘Haweis, Thomas’ in DEB, I, 536.

³³ Wood, op. cit., 536.

chaplain for 1789. His many published works were mainly 'defending Calvinism and attacking the "abominations of the Church of Rome"' ³⁴ Coetlogon's sermons were much to the liking of Henry Venn: 'His discourses are all I wish to hear – judicious, doctrinal in a proper degree, very experimental, and faithfully applied,' but evidently much disliked by Wilberforce. ³⁵

The fact that these Evangelicals, albeit few in number, were able to secure such appointments at all, often on the basis of a good reputation, suggests that the laity were much more sympathetic towards them than the clergy. On one occasion the Bishop of London, Dr Richard Terrick (London 1764-1777), on visiting St Dunstan's to preach, noted the large crowd waiting to gain admission to the church in order to hear Romaine deliver his lecture and that Romaine was being hindered from doing so by the Church authorities. He felt obliged to intervene and 'caused an end to be put to the scandal'. ³⁶ This serves as a paradigm of both the popularity of some Evangelical preachers and the hostility of some local church the authorities.

³⁴ Edwin Welch, 'Coetlogon, Charles Edward de' in DEB, i, 238.

³⁵ Elliott-Binns, op. cit., 243, 244.

³⁶ Hole, op. cit., 376.

Nevertheless, it was mainly in the 'ecclesiastical underworld', through the use of private chapels and lectureships, that Evangelicalism began to thrive in London, 'as had Puritanism 200 years earlier.'³⁷

Henry Venn's Pervasive Influence

Although not a Londoner, Henry Venn (1724-1797) was an influential Evangelical author of note in this period. Venn, elected a Fellow of Queens College, Cambridge in 1749, did not become curate at Clapham Parish Church until 1754 (-1759) and only later 'moved toward a more positive evangelicalism.'³⁸ He certainly became a popular and prominent leader of Evangelicalism (not least through his *The Complete Duty of Man*, 1763), after his move to Huddersfield in 1759. *The Complete Duty of Man* was written to correct the well-known and much valued, anonymous, devotional guide *The Whole Duty of Man* (printed in 1657). The latter was widely used by the Holy Club at Oxford and indeed was included in Wesley's *Christian Library*. It reflects the type of Churchmanship which still prevailed in the eighteenth century. The early Evangelicals were well aware of its deficiencies from their perspective. Whitefield, no doubt with some

³⁷ See Noll, op. cit., 291.

³⁸ Irvine, in 'Venn, Henry' in DEB, ii, 1137.

exaggeration, said 'Its author knew no more of Christianity than Mahomet.'³⁹ The fundamental difference, as Evangelicals saw it, between the two books was *The Whole Duty*'s dependence on works of piety in striving after salvation, in contrast to a total trusting in Christ alone. The emphasis in '*The Whole Duty*' was on Christ the Law-giver, and that of '*The Complete Duty*' on Christ the Saviour.'⁴⁰ Indeed, to Venn and his brethren, *The Whole Duty* 'appeared so defective, in the pursuit of morality downwards to its deep and only sure foundation, that he thought it necessary, not only to lay the basis anew, but also to erect again the superstructure, with all its variations and additions consequent on that fundamental change.'⁴¹ Venn's *Complete Duty of Man* certainly lacks literary grace and charm but it does have a distinct value, especially for the practical life of the Christian.⁴² The book was written from the soul and from a full heart. This, with a clear and artless style, gave the book its wide appeal.

Earlier we noted the seminal and continuing influences of the Wesleys and Whitefield in London; the persisting hostility towards Evangelicals with the consequent difficulty Evangelical clergy experienced in securing appointments of influence (notwithstanding the fact that in London all those

³⁹ See Elliott-Binns, op. cit., 402.

⁴⁰ See Ervine, 'Venn, Henry' in DEB, ii, 1137.

⁴¹ Sir James Stephen, *Essays in Ecclesiastical Biography* (1849), 1167.

⁴² See Elliott-Binns, op. cit., 403.

mentioned were university graduates); the vital ministry of Romaine; and the significant witness, energy and work of Lady Huntingdon in the Evangelical cause. All these factors contributed to a slow but gradual growth of London Evangelicalism. However, Evangelicals were still numerically weak and largely despised or ignored, especially by the clergy. What was needed now was stronger leadership (clerical and lay), greater evangelical impact on the lives of influential people, and 'some grand and weighty public cause'⁴³

⁴³ Hole, *Early History of the CMS* (1891), 33.

4. THE PHASE OF DEVELOPMENT AND MATURITY (1780-1813)

This second phase starts with John Newton's London ministry and ends with the death of John Venn in 1813. The focus is on the major Evangelical personalities, networks, societies, literature and debates which emerged in London Evangelicalism in this period.

After Romaine's eventual institution to St Anne's, Blackfriars, in 1766, no other Evangelical was appointed to a benefice in London until John Newton was appointed by John Thornton to the City living of St Mary, Woolnoth with St Mary, Woolchurch, Lombard Street, in 1779. He was instituted in December 1779.

The relative popular weakness of Evangelicalism in London is seen in the fact that at the end of the seventeenth century there were fourteen parishes in London possessing the right to nominate their own ministers ¹. Of these, it appears, in the eighteenth century only St Anne, Blackfriars had Evangelical appointments - Romaine (1766) and W Goode (Sr.) (1795). ²

¹ See Wesley D Balda, 'To The Remotest Ages', Cambridge University PhD, 1981.

² See Balda, op. cit., 42-45.

Later Henry Foster was appointed to St James, Clerkenwell (1807), and Josiah Pratt to St Stephen's, Colman Street (1826).

It was the Earl of Dartmouth (1731-1801), himself converted through Lady Huntingdon, who secured ordination for John Newton to the curacy in Olney in 1764. Although he purchased the advowsons of nearly a dozen livings none were in London. It is likely that he exercised some influence with John Thornton in Newton's new London appointment signalling a new phase in the development of Anglican Evangelicalism in London.

Whilst the work of Anglican Evangelicals in London before 1780 must not be underestimated, neither must its impact be exaggerated. John Newton was well aware of the weakness of London Evangelicalism. In a letter soon after his arrival he wrote: 'we have about ten clergymen, who, either as preachers or lecturers, preach either on the Lord's Day, or at different times of the week, in perhaps fifteen or sixteen churches.'³

Only in recent years has a fuller appreciation of Newton's importance both to Evangelicalism and the wider Church come about. Surprisingly, the DECH [1948 (first published 1912)] contains no article specifically relating to him and HM Lerner's article 'EVANGELICALS' [215-220]

³ Cited by Hindmarsh, *op.cit.*, 291.

includes only 6 lines on Newton. Again, although the ODCC [1997] includes the article 'Newton, John 1725-1807', it is only of 22 lines. Neither dictionary makes more than a passing reference to his London ministry. Astonishingly, HL Bennett in DNB , A Pollard in DEB (ii, 824,825), and AM Derham in NDCC ((1978), 704) make no reference to Newton's work with the Eclectic Society. The EB article ⁴ simply asserts: 'His fame rests on certain of the *Olney Hymns*.' However, these deficiencies have been largely remedied in recent times, notably by DB Hindmarsh. ⁵

John Newton, his Circle, and the Eclectic Society

Some biographical detail is necessary to understand Newton in context. He was the only son of a deeply pious woman. Elizabeth would take her child, John, to the Dissenting chapel of Dr David Jennings (1691-1762) at Wapping New Stairs. It was there that he was introduced to some of the new hymns (as distinct from metrical psalms) of a neighbouring minister, Isaac Watts (1674-1748). His mother 'stored my memory.....with many valuable pieces, chapters, and portions of Scriptures, catechisms, hymns, and poems' and her desire was 'from the first to bring me up

⁴ xvi, 365 (unattributed).

⁵ *John Newton and the English Evangelical Tradition* (Oxford, 1996).

with a view to the ministry, if the Lord should so incline my heart'. Further, she 'often commended me with many prayers and tears to God.'⁶

After some time at sea, he came under the influence of James Mitchell, a freethinker and before long was ridiculing faith and morals and, before reaching the age of 20, was 'a slave to every customary vice' and had 'obstinate contempt of the glorious gospel',⁷ meanwhile studying Euclid and reading Dean Stanhope's *The Christian Pattern*. Soon, after the near-sinking of *Greyhound* (1748), his spiritual search was renewed. After various fresh resolutions and commitments of varying degree, interspersed with periods of declension and back-sliding (1748-1754), Newton eventually became 'a serious professor, went twice a day to prayers at church, and determined to receive the sacrament the next opportunity.'⁸ Later he wrote: 'What a poor creature I am in myself, incapable of standing a single hour without continual supplies of strength and grace from the fountain-head.'⁹

A further factor, of profound significance for Newton and his future ministry, was the mutual friendship he came to enjoy with Alexander Clunie, a fellow sailor, who belonged to an Independent congregation. Of Clunie he wrote: 'he not only informed my understanding but his discourses inflamed

⁶ Newton, *Out of the Depths* (1935), 12-14.

⁷ Letter to Dr Jennings, cited by Pollock, *Amazing Grace* (1981), 52, 53.

⁸ Newton, op. cit., 99.

⁹ Cited by Pollock, op. cit.

my heart.’¹⁰ It was through Clunie he grasped the Christian’s security, that he could expect to be kept, ‘not by my own power and holiness but by the mighty power and promise of God through faith in an unchangeable Saviour.’¹¹

Another who made a deep impression on Newton in this early period was George Whitefield. Newton appears to have read Whitefield’s published journals and letters, probably at Alex Clunie’s instigation, before he first heard Whitefield preach in his Tabernacle at Moorfields (1754/55), during a period of ‘theological formation’, and was deeply moved.¹² Newton wrote to Haweis: ‘Soon after, upon Mr Whitefield’s return from America, my two good friends introduced me to him [Whitefield]; and although I had little personal acquaintance with him till afterwards, his ministry was exceedingly useful to me.’¹³ Thus, it was in Liverpool in 1755 that Whitefield appears to have made his major impact on Newton. On 12 September Newton wrote to his wife : ‘I made myself known to him the first night; went to see him, and conversed with him next morning, when he invited me to supper. I went home with him from the preaching, and stayed till ten o’clock.’ Again, on 16 September: ‘I heard him preach nine times, supped with him three times, and dined with him once at Mr. F****s, and on Sunday , he dined with me. I

¹⁰ Pollock, op. cit., 126.

¹¹ Pollock, op. cit., 127.

¹² See Hindmarsh, op. cit., 22.

¹³ Newton, op. cit., 143.

cannot say how much I esteem him, and hope, to my dying day, I shall have reason to bless God on his behalf.' ¹⁴ It was while Newton was living in Liverpool, before ordination, he wrote to his wife, Mary, on 12th September 1755: 'he is as he was formerly, very helpful to me. He warms my heart, makes me more indifferent to cares and crosses, and strengthens my faith.' Again, on 16 September: 'I have had more of his company than would have come to my share at London in a twelvemonth...' ¹⁵ In 1756 Newton wrote to Whitefield himself: 'I have wrote [sic] with a freedom perhaps not quite suitable to the great respect I have for you, but I hope you will excuse me ...' ¹⁶ Clearly a strong link with Whitefield had been forged well before 1760.

During a time of considerable difficulty and rejection by various bishops, who disliked 'a man who mixed with Methodists' and suspected him of Enthusiasm, he 'learnt to read New Testament Greek and Hebrew with tolerable ease'. ¹⁷ Haweis then took letters which Newton had written to him to the Earl of Dartmouth who, at the urging of Haweis, offered Newton the

¹⁴ Richard Cecil, *The Works of the Rev. John Newton* (1824), v, 502-504.

¹⁵ Cecil, *Works*, v, 502, 503.

¹⁶ LPL, MS 2937, 232.

¹⁷ See Pollock, *op. cit.*, 143, 144.

curacy of Olney. Eventually, on 29 April 1764. Newton was ordained and took up his appointment.¹⁸

Newton's ministry, both pastoral and preaching, soon prospered and people flocked to hear him. He introduced a more informal weeknight 'lecture' in the Church and a children's meeting in Lord Dartmouth's disused Great House. In his first year his *Authentic Narrative* (1764) was published.

Newton's friendship with Lord Dartmouth continued to develop. Indeed, the first 26 letters of his *Cardiphonia, or the Utterance of the Heart* (1781, Hindmarsh dates it 1780), were addressed to him. It is impossible to measure exactly the influence of his letter writing in London. The book was to become a classic and Newton quickly understood the importance of this particular ministry. In 1774 his *Omicron* (Forty-one letters on religious subjects) appeared, to which his letters signed *Vigil*, were afterwards annexed in 1793. It was his letters which finally established Newton as 'the gentle casuist of the Revival, spiritual director of souls through the post.'¹⁹ Their quality and content evidently impressed Lord Dartmouth.

¹⁸ See *ibid.*, 150, 151.

¹⁹ Hindmarsh, *op. cit.*, 249.

Although John Newton did not move to St Mary Woolnoth with St Mary Woolchurch, Lombard Street, until 1779,²⁰ he had begun writing much earlier. Indeed, he published *A Volume of Sermons* (dated 1st January, 1760) even before he took orders. However, it was perhaps his autobiography *An Authentic Narrative* (1764) which was mainly responsible for his name coming to prominence. A further *Volume of Sermons*, preached at Olney, was published in 1767, his *Review of Ecclesiastical History* in 1769, his *Omicron* in 1774,²¹ and a *Volume of Hymns* (some of which were composed by WM Cowper) in 1779.

Hymn-singing undoubtedly came to occupy a place of importance in Evangelical piety and Newton found it to be a very suitable form for the expression of his spiritual ideals.²² It served to provide a place for the religious affections in an age of rationalism and formalism²³. In this way it helped stem the tide of desertion of worshippers to brighter and livelier styles of worship of other denominations. However, the didactic value of hymns was also recognised. This seems to be implied by Newton himself in the Preface to his *Olney Hymns*: 'But I trust ... while my hand can write, and my tongue speak, it will be the business and pleasure of my life, to aim at

²⁰ See *Certificate of Induction* dated 8 December 1779, LPL MS3973.

²¹ Rouse corrects Cecil's date of 1762 in her edition of Cecil's *John Newton* (Fearn, 2000), 116

²² See Hindmarsh, op. cit., 257.

²³ See Davies, *Worship and Theology in England*, Combined edition, Part 1 (Grand Rapids, 1996), 235, 236. Also I Bradley, *Abide with Me* (1997), 14.

promoting their growth [of his Olney congregation] and establishment in the grace of our God and Saviour.'²⁴

We should note, too, Newton's avowed aims in respect of his style of writing hymns: 'Perspicuity, simplicity and ease, should be chiefly attended to; and the imagery and coloring of poetry, if admitted at all, should be indulged very sparingly and with great judgment.'²⁵ Many of his hymns were written specifically for his Olney weekly prayer meeting. Probably, with the original publication of *Olney Hymns* in 1779, wide use of them would have been made by Newton at Woolnoth, although perhaps infrequently at times of liturgical worship.

Newton's *Authentic Narrative*, made public in 1764 by Thomas Haweis,²⁶ was a simple, straightforward account of his early life, conversion and call to the ministry. It was the autobiographical element of this work which gave it special appeal. It was a lucid example of a testimony written up for pious edification, for it 'provided a living illustration of how a personal evangelical conversion could transform a life'. At the same time it reflected the eighteenth-century evangelical ethos, and contributed to its development. The work certainly 'brought Newton into public and international

²⁴ J Newton, *Olney Hymns* (1779, facsimile 1997), xiii.

²⁵ Newton, *Olney Hymns*, vii, viii.

²⁶ Later published as *Out of the Depths* in 1935.

prominence,²⁷ but it also had implications for his own subsequent life. It is likely that the strong and positive response to it served to increase his own confidence in the spreading of the evangelical message. By 1780, personal anecdotes, the experiential dimension, and practical application were characteristic of his preaching.

Newton was also instrumental in launching the *Gospel Magazine, or Spiritual Library, Designed to promote Religion, Devotion, and Piety, from Evangelical Principles*, in 1766. John Wesley was later to call the magazine 'that Monthly Medley of truth and error ... trumped up as a vehicle to convey Calvinism and slander the nation.'²⁸ However, in fairness, Wesley had previously criticised bishops who had rejected Newton 'because he was not at the university'²⁹

This raises the question of Newton's intellectual ability and learning. He was clearly highly intelligent and an avid reader. 'Even while in Africa he had mastered the first six books of Euclid...subsequently he taught himself Latin, reading Virgil, Terence, Livy and Erasmus, and learning Horace by

²⁷ See Hindmarsh, loc. cit., 15, 16.

²⁸ Cited by Hindmarsh, op. cit., 249.

²⁹ See Pollock, op. cit., 146.

heart. At the same time he studied the Bible with increasing devotion...³⁰

But he did not rate himself an academic. When the University of New Jersey conferred on him an honorary DD degree, he wrote: 'However, therefore, the university may overrate my attainments ...I must not forget myself; it would be both vain and improper were I to concur in it.'³¹ After one voyage he wrote: 'I added Juvenal to Horace; and for prose authors I pitched upon Livy, Caesar, and Sallust.' Later, 'I read Terence, Virgil, and several pieces of Cicero, and the modern classics, Buchanan, Erasmus, and Cassimir'. However, he grew 'weary of contemplative truths which can neither warm nor amend the heart, but rather tend to aggrandize self.'³²

Newton's Biblicism and Anglicanism were fully settled before he left Olney. A good example of his biblical interpretation and preaching may be discovered from notes (c.1765) in the Cowper and Newton Museum, Olney. Before elucidating Romans 8:29 and the topic of predestination, he offers the reader four rules for the understanding of difficult verses.³³ He believed in what was then known as 'the analogy of faith' – 'it is a master-key, which

³⁰ HL Bennett, 'Newton, John' in DNB, i, 1488.

³¹ Newton, *Out of the Depths*, 187,188

³² Newton, op. cit. 120-122.

³³ Recently transcribed and edited by Rouse, *The Searcher of hearts: Notes on Romans 8:26-34* (Fearn, 1997).

not only opens particular doors, but carries you through the whole house; but an attachment to a rigid system is dangerous.’³⁴

He demonstrates his biblicism again when he outlines the scope and authority of his preaching: ‘Search and read for yourselves, if the Scripture does not speak to all mankind as in a state of condemnation; if it affords us any hope of deliverance, but for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ; if it intimates any method of being saved through him, but by faith wrought by the operation of God, and evinced by a temper of love, if these points, which comprise the general scope of my preaching, are contained and taught in the Bible, they ought not to be spoken against.’³⁵

It is true that he does not often refer to the Anglican formularies. Except when speaking to professed members of the Church, he prefers to appeal to ‘the highest authority, the holy scripture.’³⁶ However, his Anglicanism was stated explicitly in his *Apologia*, or defence of conformity in 1784³⁷ in

³⁴ Newton, op. cit., 69, 70, 200.

³⁵ Op. cit., 580.

³⁶ Op. cit., 580.

³⁷ *Works*, v, 2-58.

which he had, specifically, 'in mind about twenty dissenting ministers in London'.³⁸ We do not hear of any such ministers changing their opinions after reading this document; but it may well be that some ministers of the Established Church were encouraged to remain such. *Apologia* was in the form of a series of four letters to Samuel Parker (1714-1813), minister of an Independent congregation in Mare Street, Hackney – 'My Dear Friend and Brother'.³⁹ Newton's 'warm and generous spirit' pervades these letters, in particular his desire to avoid a contentious spirit: 'I had rather be silent than plead, even for truth, in an angry, contentious spirit'.⁴⁰ The letters demonstrate that he came to his own membership of the Established Church only after much careful thought.⁴¹ That 'I [now] exercise my ministry in the Church of England, appears to me, as things stand, to be rather a subject of congratulation than compassion.'⁴² His final letter explains his reasons for remaining in the Established Church – his agreement with the Book of Common Prayer, the weaknesses of Congregationalism, the probability of

³⁸ Hindmarsh, op. cit., 316.

³⁹ *Apologia* (1784), 2, 16, 30, 42.

⁴⁰ Op. cit., 17.

⁴¹ Op. cit., 30-42.

⁴² Op. cit., 43.

greater usefulness in the Established Church, and the openings and the leadings of Providence - He adds I could no more be a dissenter 'than I could subscribe to the dogmas of the Council of Trent'. ⁴³

We find him preferring not to apply the term 'Methodist' to himself because of a general imprecision in defining the term. He later wrote: 'I am at a loss whether to confess or deny that I am (what some account me) a Methodist. If it be supposed to include any thing, whether in principle or conduct, unsuitable to the character of a regular minister of the Church of England, I may, and I do, disown it.'⁴⁴ He declines to answer directly Bishop Porteus's Articles of Enquiry (1790) on Methodists in the parish because of vague and indeterminate use of the term. ⁴⁵

It was soon after his arrival in London that Newton wrote an address (1 November 1781) to his new parishioners entitled 'I Beseech Thee To Hear Me Patiently' ⁴⁶. In certain respects it could be seen as a manifesto. In an important paragraph he stresses his protestantism, biblicism and Anglicanism. Thus, 'As a protestant minister, and preaching to protestant

⁴³ Op. cit. 42.

⁴⁴ *Works*, vi, 571.

⁴⁵ Visitation Articles, LPL.

⁴⁶ *Works*, vi, 571.

hearers, I not only take my text from the scriptures, but likewise draw from thence the proofs and illustrations of what I advance in my sermons. I frequently, yea constantly, appeal to the Bible, the acknowledged standard and touchstone of religious sentiments.⁴⁷ Newton sums up his comprehensive approach: 'As many locks, whose wards differ, are opened with equal ease by one master-key; so there is a certain comprehensive view of scriptural truth, which opens hard places, solves objections, and happily reconciles, illustrates and harmonizes many texts, which to those who have not this master-key, frequently styled *the analogy of faith*, appear little less than contradictory to each other. When you have this key, you will be sure you have the right sense.'⁴⁸

Newton's sacramental teaching and practice were also well formed before his London ministry. Thus, in regard to a proper approach to the Lord's Supper: 'those who are not habitually prepared, by a love of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in conversation becoming his Gospel, cannot work themselves into a right disposition by a few outward forms, in which their hearts are little concerned and in which their own performances have more of their

⁴⁷ *Works*, vi, 571.

⁴⁸ *Works*, i, 189.

⁴⁹ Newton, Lecture 27 (unpublished), March, 1766. [C & N M]

confidence than the righteousness and person of the Lord Jesus Christ.⁵⁰ Again, 'And as from this subject I would encourage some to come, so I would warn others to stay away. If the death of Christ as the sacrifice for sin is not your chief, your own ground of hope, if you do not hate and lothe those sins which caused his death, you have as yet no business at his table, you cannot approach it without mocking him.'⁵⁰

It is highly likely that Lord Dartmouth would have discussed Newton and his Evangelicalism with a wide circle of London acquaintances. Newton himself had friends at St James' Place and Wimbledon⁵¹ and had been known from earlier days by William Wilberforce. Lord Dartmouth had already introduced him to a number of influential persons, including Sir Sidney Smyth (1705-1778), MP for East Grinstead and a prominent judge, and also John Thornton. Thomas Haweis was officially appointed one of Lady Huntingdon's chaplains in 1774 and almost certainly would have spoken to her of Newton's *Authentic Narrative* and it is likely to have been read by some of those who attended her London home.

⁵⁰ Newton, Lecture 25 (unpublished), February 1766. [C & N M]

⁵¹ See Martin, *John Newton* (1950), 303.

By his appointment to St Mary, Woolnoth, in 1779, Newton was thrust into a small but important parish. Within the parish was the Mansion House and the Lord Mayor for each year was a parishioner, which added symbolic significance. However, his London ministry was centred as much on his home in Charles Square, Hoxton, as on the church building. The Newtons kept open house and his celebrated breakfast parties, at which ministers and friends of all denominations attended, were followed by discussion in his study. Richard Cecil remarked of his conversation and habits among friends, they 'were more peculiar, amusing and instructive than any I ever witnessed.'⁵² Again, 'His house was open to Christians of all ranks and denominations. Here, like a father among his children, he used to entertain, encourage, and instruct his friends ...' ⁵³

In a letter to Thomas Scott of 19th October 1779, while awaiting confirmation of his appointment to St. Mary, Woolnoth, he wrote: 'What a satisfaction it is to know that all things are at the Lord's disposal, under his management, and that in a way beyond our apprehension, he can and will overrule them for good.'⁵⁴ Again, on 29th May 1780 Newton mentions a particular difficulty: 'How to force myself upon them [his parishioners] I know not. To be received as a guest by the rich people, except I shall be

⁵² See Pollock, op. cit., 172.

⁵³ Cecil, *Newton*, 175.

⁵⁴ GL MS 16949.

received as a Minister, would not answer any end, and to go down upon their ground in hopes of inducing them to come up to mine, would be rather a hazardous experiment. I dare not venture upon it. My temper which makes me unwilling to give offence, might lead me to improper compliances.⁵⁵

The tension alluded to here does not appear to have been between 'clerical self-consciousness' and social acceptability. Rather, it was between vocational duty (to be faithful to the Gospel) and natural disposition (a desire not to cause offence)⁵⁶ In these letters we see also the comfort which his belief in the sovereignty of God engendered. It was his openness and candour which partly explains the wide range of friendships which Newton enjoyed.

There are clear indications of Newton's friendships with other clergy in the Parish Registers of St Mary, Woolnoth, 1789-1805.⁵⁷ The following names, with the number of preaching occasions in brackets, appear: Thomas Scott (12), Charles Simeon (11), Henry Foster (7), Richard Cecil (6), William Goode (4), George Patrick (1), William Romaine (d.1795) (1), among others. Some of these, as we shall see, were closely involved in the Eclectic

⁵⁵ GL, MS, loc. cit..

⁵⁶ On Evangelical self-consciousness, see MJD Roberts, 'Private Patronage and the Church of England. 1800-1900.' in JEH, xxxii, 2 (April 1981), 204.

⁵⁷ LPL, MS100.

Society. The mutual respect and affection which developed between the older Newton and Simeon is evident in Newton's letter to Simeon, aged 23, on his appointment to Holy Trinity, Cambridge: 'Tho' I have had but little personal intercourse with you, it has been sufficient to interest me in your concerns – and as you thought proper to ask my advice when you were in town, this mark of your confidence encourages me to write with freedom as though we were old acquaintance...' He concludes the paragraph by stating 'my sincere regard, and the cordiality of my intentions.'⁵⁸ Martin draws attention to a visit to Cambridge later in 1791 'where Newton met his friends Henry Venn and Charles Simeon, he slept in King's College, dined at Magdalene, and took his daily walk up and down the gardens of Queens.'⁵⁹

Ford K Brown refers to 'the small group' Newton belonged to (in 1785) and 'probably not a hundred people all told', who included 'few influential people of means and standing', and 'as a group they had no clear direction, no organization, no programme, no means, no resources, no propaganda, no

⁵⁸ Letter 23rd December 1782, Ridley Hall Library.

⁵⁹ Martin, *op. cit.*, 334.

⁶⁰ Brown, *op. cit.*, 2.

numbers, no power, Above all, they had no leader.'⁶⁰ In the main, Ford Brown is correct; Simeon and Wilberforce had not yet become prominent. However, as far as London was concerned, Newton was already being recognised as a leader.

We shall see later other major aspects of Newton's leadership and significance, notably with the Eclectic Society; but here we simply note his influence on William Wilberforce. Wilberforce had already been profoundly influenced by Isaac Milner in 1784 but in 1785 passed through a time of soul-sickness. Eventually he plucked up courage to seek spiritual advice from Newton (then living at Hoxton) who advised him not to cut himself off from his circle of friends or to withdraw from public life. On 7 December Newton wrote to Wilberforce: 'It is hoped and believed that the Lord has raised you up for the good of His church and for the good of the nation.'⁶¹ In 1797, after the publication of *A Practical View*, Newton wrote: 'I deem it the most valuable and important publication of the present age, especially as it is yours.'⁶²

⁶¹ See Pollock, *Wilberforce: God's Statesman* (Eastbourne, 2001), 68.

⁶² See Coupland, *Wilberforce* (1945), 197.

It was Newton's pastoral sensitivity which contributed to a general acceptance and growing appreciation by his parishioners. Nevertheless, as is clear from Cecil's sermon at Newton's funeral, he was not well received by all. Referring particularly to his parishioners, Cecil said: 'I speak more especially to such as have not duly appreciated the ministry of their late worthy pastor.'⁶³

Regarding the Abolitionist cause, Newton's influence may be seen in two respects. First, there was his close friendship with Wilberforce which enabled him to give him strong encouragement to work out his faith by participation in social action and not by withdrawal from the world. Thus Newton prays for God's wisdom 'to guide and animate you in the line of Political Duty ...'⁶⁴ This friendship continued to the end of his life.⁶⁵ Its depth is indicated by Newton's comment in 1799: 'I am ready to address you

⁶³ Cecil (ed. M Rouse), *The Life of John Newton* (2000), 383.

⁶⁴ Letter 18 May (1786), Bod. Lib. MS Wilberforce c. 49. fol.9, cited by Rouse, op. cit., 176.

⁶⁵ See Wilberforce's letter of 6 September 1788, Bod. Lib. MS Wilberforce c. 49 fols. 19-20.

⁶⁶ Letter (31 July, 1799), Bod. Lib. MS Wilberforce c. 49 fols. 12, 13, cited by Rouse, op. cit., 177, 253.

in the words of Mordecai "who knoweth but that God has raised you up for such a time as this!"⁶⁶ Second, as the only leader with practical experience of the slave trade, he wrote his pamphlet 'Thoughts upon the African Slave-Trade' (1787). He said: 'Silence at such a time and on such an occasion would, in me, be criminal.'⁶⁷ The pamphlet, well argued and appealing to heart and conscience, was widely distributed. When called to give evidence before the Privy Council, Newton was shown to his seat by Wilberforce. His part, therefore, if not decisive, was certainly highly significant.

This link with Wilberforce, in addition to that with Hannah More, which we note later, certainly means that his Evangelical leadership qualities would have been known to Bishop Beilby Porteus (1731-1808), particularly after his translation to London in 1787. Porteus was not an Evangelical in theology, being out of sympathy with the Calvinism currently upheld by men like Newton,⁶⁸ but he conspicuously identified himself with the practical ideals of Evangelicalism. He became a decided supporter of the Abolitionist cause. Here, in rudimentary form, is one of the networks which were a feature of Evangelicalism and a major means of its growth.

⁶⁷ Cited by Pollock, *Amazing Grace* (1981), 176.

⁶⁸ See 'Porteus, Beilby' in ODCC, 1310.

Newton had contact with Samuel Parker (1714-1813) and other London Dissenters. His general approach to Dissenters is summed up by his remark: 'I believe whenever two or three meet together in the Saviour's name ... The spot whereon they stand is, for that time, *Holy Ground*'.⁶⁹ His inclination was not towards controversy but, nevertheless, as his *Apologia* indicates, he did not shrink from it when he thought it necessary.

The Baptist minister, William Jay [1769-1853] of Bath, stated: 'I deem Mr. Newton [with Cornelius Winter] the most perfect instance of the spirit and temper of Christianity I ever knew.'⁷⁰ It was this which gained him the respect and affection of many Dissenters.

Clearly his location in London, where he could contribute to the most important religious developments and controversies of his time, became pivotal in Evangelicalism's progress. Others did, indeed, take on some of Newton's leadership activities; but he remained the Evangelical elder statesman in London until his death in 1807. His influence was powerful and certainly persisted until the end of our period.

⁶⁹ Cited by Rouse, op. cit., 318.

⁷⁰ Cited in *The Autobiography of William Jay* (Edinburgh, 1974), 285.

Thomas Scott (1747-1821)

In 1785 Thomas Scott (1747-1821) accepted the joint chaplaincy at the Lock Chapel with CE de Coetlogon (1746-1820). However, Scott did not get on well with his colleague and the governors disliked his style of preaching. Nevertheless, Wilberforce frequently expressed his admiration for Scott's preaching, 'an admiration which was shared by his friend Eliot, later Lord St. Germans,'¹ and, indeed, 'For sixteen years ... was in the habit of attending Mr Scott's ministry at the chapel of the Lock Hospital.' Wilberforce remarked: 'the substantial solidity of his discourses made those of ordinary clergymen, though good and able men, appear comparatively somewhat superficial and defective in the matter.'² This more favourable opinion seems to have been shared by Hannah More. More was one who came to hear Scott; and sometimes would walk the six miles to Bread Street to hear him preach. She recollected, 'With the worst voice, the most northern accent, and very plain manners, sound

¹ See *Life of Scott*, i, 203 f., 253, cited by Elliott-Binns, op. cit., 244.

² See JH Pratt, *Notes of the Discussions of the Eclectic Society* (1856), 28, 29.

sense and sound piety were yet so predominant that like Aaron's serpent, they swallowed up the rest.' ³ Another regular worshipper at the Lock Hospital Chapel was Lord Dartmouth.⁴

Scott had already been the recipient of Newton's counsel when the latter (whom he was to follow) was incumbent of Olney. It appears that an incident of Newton's visiting of dying parishioners, whom Scott had neglected, made a profound impression on him and brought him to a sense of his need – 'The need of pardon and justification became to him a reality. He came to seek it in Christ and by this means was led to see that the Saviour he needed must be Divine.' ⁵ Here, again, we see evidence of the sensitivity and respect which were always prominent in Newton's dealings with people. Scott bore testimony to this: 'under discouraging circumstances, I had occasion to call upon him; and his discourse so comforted and edified me, that my heart, being by his means relieved from its burden, became susceptible of affection for him. From that time I

³ Cited by Anne Stott, *Hannah More* (Oxford, 2003), 86.

⁴ Hindmarsh, *op. cit.*, 293.

⁵ AC Downer, *Thomas Scott: The Commentator* (1909), 34.

was inwardly pleased to have him for my friend.’⁶ At this stage Scott still considered Newton ‘a person misled by enthusiastical notions.’⁷

After lengthy correspondence in 1775, Scott’s religious views became settled during this Olney period.⁸ This correspondence, again, is marked by Christian affection and profound respect – Scott writes: I ‘shall not scruple to write to you as a friend’ and ‘assuring that I rejoice in your friendship’. Scott had moved from his earlier Socinian to a full and orthodox Trinitarian belief. It was this experience, the narrative of his inner life, which led him to write and publish *The Force of Truth* (1779) which was to prove such a help to so many. Indeed, the change in his understanding and the means by which it was brought about forms the second part of the book.

Quite apart from his qualities as a leader and preacher, his gifts as a teacher and writer were equally important. In spite of his irregular and somewhat defective education he showed himself to have a remarkable mind. His biographer notes Scott’s statement: ‘my determination to set about this inquiry proceeded not so much from anxious fears about my

⁶ Cited by Cecil, *John Newton* (2000), 112.

⁷ Ibid., 113.

⁸ See letters of 12th June 8th, 26th July, 14th Aug. 30th Sept. 1780, 8th Feb. 1781, LPL, MS 3973.

own soul, as from a deep sense impressed on my heart of the importance of my ministry, the worth of souls committed to my charge, and the awful account to be given of them.”⁹ It is the spiritual pilgrimage aspect of *The Force of Truth*, combined with his clear and readable style, which carries the reader forward. It points up the importance of prayer, constant study of the Holy Scriptures and, by implication, the necessity of orthodox Christology, the doctrine of the Trinity and, particularly, the doctrine of Justification. Thus, the book had real value both to the serious inquirer and the intelligent believer seeking to deepen his understanding.

It was at the Lock Chapel that Scott became aware that he lacked those winsome qualities and that eloquence to which the congregation had been accustomed. Thus, ‘we find him complaining of being thought angry and “scolding” in the pulpit.’ However, his heart was certainly drawn towards ‘the poor and miserable patients in the wards.’¹⁰ Among the ‘principal friends’ of Scott, mentioned by Downer, are John Newton, Daniel Wilson (one of Scott’s hearers at the Lock), Romaine, Cecil, John Venn, and

⁹ Downer, loc. cit., 34.

¹⁰ See Pollard, ‘Scott, Thomas’ in DEB, ii, 990, and AC Downer, op cit., 48.

Josiah Pratt. Amongst the laity Downer includes Wilberforce, Hannah More, and Henry Thornton.¹¹

Scott is chiefly remembered for his celebrated commentary *The Holy Bible*, completed in 1792. It is likely that his views of Scripture, as to its inspiration, authority and interpretation, both reflected and influenced the views of his fellow Eclectics. These are fully expounded in his Preface and certainly exemplify his Evangelical biblicism. Thus, his view of the superintendence of the Holy Spirit required that 'Every sentence in this view must be considered as "the sure testimony of God" in that sense in which it is proposed as truth ...[The authors] wrote, indeed, in such language, as their different talents, educations, habits and associations suggested, or rendered natural to them; but the Holy Spirit ... entirely superintended.' He insisted the Holy Scriptures should be considered as a *complete* revelation and that the *whole* word of God is our rule and was deeply suspicious of 'spiritual' explanation of Scripture which so easily led to mere fanciful interpretations. Scott described his own approach as follows: The author 'has therefore purposely avoided sharp and eager controversy, and studied exactness and consistency; choosing rather to

¹¹ See Downer, *op cit.*, 94-96.

follow the leadings of Scripture, than to press it into the service of a pre-established system.' ¹²

The work was an immediate success with 37,000 complete sets being sold before Scott's death in 1821.¹³ Sales 'became more rapid than ever after his death' and between 1821 and 1845 at least a further 10,000 copies were sold.¹⁴ Scott's declared aim in the Preface was to 'speak plainly and intelligibly to persons of ordinary capacity' and he worked on the principle that 'every passage of Scripture has its literal and distinct meaning, which it is the first duty of the commentator to explain, and speaking generally the *spiritual meaning* is no other than this *real meaning* with its fair legitimate application to ourselves.' In this way he sought to avoid fanciful ideas of his own. Not surprisingly, it was used at family prayers in almost every Evangelical home. ¹⁵ A later Evangelical bishop claimed: 'it formed the lives, and guided the morals of countless multitudes of Evangelicals' and by its production and circulation, 'No better proof of the vitality of Evangelicalism in this period could be given.'¹⁶

¹² See Scott, 'Preface' to *The Holy Bible* (1866 edition).

¹³ 2nd ed. (4 vols) 1809, 3rd ed. (5 vols) 1810, 4th ed. (6 vols.) 1812, with many subsequent reprints. See A Gordon, 'Scott, Thomas' in DNB, (1975), ii, 1874.

¹⁴ M Seeley, *The Later Evangelical Fathers* (1914), 156.

¹⁵ See Balleine, op. cit., 120.

¹⁶ EA Knox, *The Tractarian Movement* (1933), 67.

Scott's biographer asserts: It is agreed that the theology disclosed in all his works is comprehensive; "the anti-Calvinist reproached him for his Calvinism and the hyper-Calvinist called him an Arminian"; it is opposed to Antinomianism and marked by a holy and practical strictness; while it is strongly evangelical, bringing out for the comfort and support of all true seeking souls the doctrines of grace.'¹⁷

Among Scott's other works are *A Discourse upon Repentance* (1785), *Treatise on Growth in Grace* (1787), *Essays on the Most Important Subjects in Scripture* (ended 1794) and *Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress* (1795). JH Newman spoke of 'the minutely practical character of his writings'¹⁸ but the full extent of their impact in London cannot be measured.

Scott died neglected, even despised, by the hierarchy of the Established Church. Nevertheless, it remains true that he had more learning and spiritual discernment than most of those who impugned him.¹⁹ However,

¹⁷ Downer, op. cit., 74.

¹⁸ Newman, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* (1864), 5.

¹⁹ See Downer, op.cit., 97.

whatever shortcomings there may have been to his preaching and defects in the breadth of his reading, JH Pratt offered this assessment: 'a man of very superior understanding and of a masculine grasp of mind' and cites Bishop Daniel Wilson's remark in his funeral sermon: 'Such were the richness and originality of his matter, such his acquaintance with Scripture, and with the human heart, and such the skill which he evinced as a Christian moralist, that by hearers of attentive and reflective minds he was listened to, not only with respect, but with delight.'.²⁰ James Stephen, writing nearly thirty years after Scott's death, was not uncritical of Scott's ignorance of other authors, his style, and his methodology, but is emphatic in his tribute to *The Family Bible*.²¹ Scott was indeed a self-educated grazier turned clergyman but also a biblical scholar. JH Newman speaks of him as 'the writer who made a deeper impression on my mind than any other, and to whom (humanly speaking) I almost owe my soul.'²² Also, 'I so admired and delighted in his writings ... A man whom I so deeply revered.' and 'I had been possessed by his *Force of Truth*,'²³ He showed his lasting respect for Scott by his attendance at Wilson's 'two sermons on Scott's life and death at St John's Chapel'.²⁴

²⁰ Pratt, *The Thought of the Evangelical Leaders* (1978), 28.

²¹ *Essays in Ecclesiastical Biography* (1849), 64f.

²² Newman, op. cit., 5.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

In addition to his Lock Chapel responsibilities, Scott was also lecturer at St Mildred's, Bread Street and preacher at St Margaret's, Lothbury.

Richard Cecil (1748-1810)

Richard Cecil's most significant contribution to Evangelicalism in London was from 1780-1808 when he was minister of St John's, Bedford Row. However, he had previously lived in Islington from where he exercised a preaching ministry through lectureships at Orange Street, Leicester Fields, Long Acre, St Margaret's Lothbury and Christ Church Spitalfields. He had himself undertaken all financial responsibility for Bedford Chapel where repairs were urgently required on his appointment; but with the considerable help of friends in guaranteeing future support no call was made on him. Elliott-Binns states he was 'a great source of strength to the Evangelical cause in London, not only on account of his preaching, but even more on account of his pure and lofty character.'²⁵

JH Pratt refers to the 'remarkable natural gifts...which embellished Mr Cecil's ministry.' Bishop Samuel Wilberforce described him as 'the one

²⁵ Elliott-Binns, op. cit., 245.

clerical genius of his party'.²⁶ Cecil himself had great admiration for Newton and indeed published *Memoirs of the Rev. John Newton* (3rd edn.1808).

Doubtless, part of the reason for his attractive and influential preaching was his love and breadth of reading. Daniel Wilson, who had been Cecil's curate at Chobham and Bisley, wrote in 1810: 'The stores of his mind were copious....There was scarcely a branch of literature or science with which he had not some acquaintance.'²⁷ Again, 'the genius of the man broke through on every occasion and gilded and adorned the topics he handledhe was, not merely one of the most eminent preachers of his day, but one of a totally different order from others, a completely original preacher.'²⁸ Even the normally unsympathetic High Church *British Critic* acknowledged him as: 'a very profound and original preacher.'²⁹ Many of his sermons were published.

Many contemporary London preachers, and thus also their congregations, would have profited both from his preaching and his remarks on

²⁶ See Pratt, *Notes*, 26, and E Stock, *History of the CMS* (1899), i, 43.

²⁷ D Wilson, *The Blessedness of the Christian in Death*. (1810), 22, 23.

²⁸ Wilson, *op. cit.*, 35,36.

²⁹ *iv*, (1828), 257.

preaching. JH Pratt collected a number of his *obiter dicta*.³⁰ He was a regular attendee at Newton's breakfasts where, no doubt, many London Evangelicals valued his knowledge and wisdom.

He enjoyed close contact with different members of the Clapham Sect - holidaying once with Wilberforce, preaching occasionally at Clapham, having Charles Grant and his wife in his congregation at St John's, Bedford Row. He was elected as one of the original members of the CMS Committee and preached the third Annual Sermon ('incisive and epigrammatic').³¹ He readily allowed some of his writings to be used by the Religious Tract Society. However, his greatness was not due solely to his indisputable gifts. His undoubted godliness and spirituality contributed much to the esteem in which he was held, in spite of his delicate health.³² He was an exemplar to his fellow Evangelicals and widely respected by those who did not share his Evangelical convictions.

Basil Woodd (1760-1831)

Basil Woodd was another significant minister who came to prominence at this time. He ministered at Bentinck Chapel, Edgware Road, from 1785 to

³⁰ See M Loane, *Oxford and the Evangelical Succession* (1950), 115.

³¹ Stock, *op. cit.*, 76.

³² Overton, *op. cit.*, 78.

1831. Woodd's contribution to London Evangelicalism was two-fold: Firstly, he exercised a powerful influence as a famous and popular Evangelical preacher. Secondly, he secured continuity of Evangelical witness at the Chapel: 'He bought the lease of the chapel in 1797 for 40 years' and hence 'was both proprietor and minister for 34 years'. The chapel continued to flourish even with the opening of Christ Church in 1826 only a few yards away.³³

The Evangelical character of the Chapel was maintained by its lease to the Revd. Thomas Webster for £100 per annum. During the ministry of Thomas Webster, 1825-1833, a series of mid-week lectures entitled "Points of Controversy between Roman Catholics and Protestants" was held. These showed that Webster was an ultra-protestant with an anti-Roman Catholic stance,³⁴ whose Evangelicalism stood in stark contrast with that of the Clapham Sect and the *Christian Observer*. Woodd 'loved the church, her platform of episcopal discipline, her liturgy'³⁵

³³ See Pomfret, op. cit., 37.

³⁴ Pomfret, op. cit., 97, 98.

³⁵ D Wilson, *The Character of a Good Man as a Christian Minister* (1831), cited by Ervine in DEB, ii, 1217. Woodd also wrote *The Excellence of the Liturgy* (1810).

Henry Foster (1745-1814)

Henry Foster (deacon 1767, priest 1769) was curate to William Romaine at St Anne, Blackfriars. He held a lectureship in the parish as well as others for over twenty years. He was an outstanding preacher and on one occasion in 1785 was heard by William Wilberforce, who found him 'very good', even though the previous month he had fallen asleep during the sermon! ³⁶ He was from 1780 minister of Long Acre proprietary Chapel.

Foster had stood for election to St James in 1790 (he withdrew after seeing friends roughly treated) and was nominated again in 1804, by which time he had resided within the parish for forty years. This time he was successful in the election but 'a motion by the opposition immediately restrained the churchwardens from nominating to the Bishop.'³⁷ Elections of incumbents to St James had proved notoriously difficult and disruptive. The issues were the definition of 'parishioner' and the determination of 'legal electors'. Eventually the Lord Chancellor ruled in June 1807 and Foster was duly instituted in 1807.

³⁶ See Elliott-Binns, op. cit., 243, 244.

³⁷ Balda, op. cit., 47.

He was 'a plain and deeply pious man'.³⁸ The fact that Beilby Porteus consecrated a new building for him in 1792, when he was minister of Long Acre proprietary Chapel (1780-1807), indicates the esteem in which he was held by the Bishop. He was co-founder of the Eclectic Society and pioneer of CMS.³⁹ We know that *Newton's Memoirs of the Life of the Late Rev. William Grimshaw* (1799) comprised 'Six Letters to the Late Rev Henry Foster, Minister of St James, Clerkenwell'.⁴⁰ However, Foster's greatest admirer was John Thornton.

Foster's election to St James illustrates the difficulties Evangelicals experienced in being appointed in situations where 'Anglican congregationalism' operated. It demonstrates the uncertainty, even precariousness, of this mode of patronage for Evangelicals. Balda states: 'Most important for evangelical churchmen, these examples showed the inadvisability of some dissenting solutions to ecclesiastical problems and perhaps provided an additional argument for remaining within the accepted bounds of ecclesiastical propriety.'⁴¹

³⁸ See Bebbington, *Evangelicalism* (1989), 87.

³⁹ See Wood, 'Foster, Henry' in DEB, i, 400.

⁴⁰ See Rouse, *John Newton*, 246, f.n., 22.

⁴¹ Balda, op. cit., 48

William Goode (1762-1816)

William Goode was another of Romaine's curates who should be noted. He joined Romaine as curate of St Andrew-by-the-Wardrobe and St Anne, Blackfriars, in 1786 and followed Romaine as Rector (1795-1816). Goode became lecturer at St John's, Wapping (1796-1816), Sunday evening lecturer at Christ Church, Spitalfields (1807-1810), and Wednesday morning lecturer at Blackfriars in 1810.⁴² Goode's Anglican convictions were confirmed when, at the time of his candidature for St. Michael, Wood Street (1792), it was recorded 'The Articles of the Church he firmly believes, without *limitation* or *reserve*; and the whole of its services he glories in, as most comfortable to the word of God.'⁴³ Pollard also draws attention to Goode's scholarly activity in his production of *An Entire New Version of the Book of Psalms* (1811) and a series of 156 *Essays on All the Scriptural Names and Titles of Christ* (published posthumously in 1822)

Other significant London Evangelicals include George Patrick (sometimes Patrick) (1746-1800) whom DM Lewis describes as 'well educated, well connected and pastorally disinclined' and whose 'eloquent

⁴² Pollard, 'Goode, William', DEB, i, 454, 455.

⁴³ Cited by Pollard, op. cit., 455.

but direct evangelical preaching attracted both large congregations and vehement opposition.’⁴⁴ He himself had been converted through hearing Newton, Foster and Richard Cecil in London and, in 1795, became the assistant to Henry Foster and elected lecturer at St Leonard, Shoreditch in 1796 by a vote of 947 to 357. In the same year he also became Sunday evening lecturer at St Bride’s, Fleet Street. In each of these churches he drew congregations which each averaged 1,500, larger than any other London church at the time.’⁴⁵ He lectured at St Margaret’s, Lothbury. Also important in the City was Samuel Crowther from 1800-1829. Crowther had been scholar and fellow of New College, Oxford, 1788-1804 and was president of Sion College in 1819.⁴⁶

The Eclectic Society

There can be little doubt that the formation of the Eclectic Society was highly significant for the future growth of Evangelicalism generally and London Evangelicalism particularly. Indeed, ‘some of the most important steps in the history of the party had their origin in the debates of this little

⁴⁴ ‘Patrick, George’ in DEB, ii, 859, 860.

⁴⁵ See DM Lewis, in DEB, ii, 860.

⁴⁶ See JS Reynolds, ‘Crowther, Samuel’ in DEB, i., 277.

society.¹ The Eclectic Society was established originally in 1783 for 'religious intercourse and improvement, and for the investigation of religious truth.'² Bernard Martin attributes its formation to Newton. After he came to London 'he formed a discussion group which met at The Castle and Falcon.....It was not long before the Society was known as "The Eclectic", probably by Newton, from a sentence in Isaac Watts.'³ Similar clerical associations already existed in Truro ⁴ and in Yorkshire (The Elland Clerical Society).

The original members were John Newton, Henry Foster, Richard Cecil, and Eli Bates, Esq, but John Newton probably remained the early driving force of the Society. Subsequently, meetings were held once a fortnight, at the Vestry-room of St John's Chapel, Bedford Row, and, according to the original design, included 'two or three Laymen and Dissenting Ministers'. Newton's letter to his wife (22 August 1785), on returning from an Eclectic Society, reveals that on this occasion only a few

¹ Balleine, op. cit., 64.

² See Pratt (ed.), *The Thought of the Evangelical Leaders* (reprinted 1978).

³ Martin, *John Newton* (1950), 322.

⁴ See Pollard, 'Walker, Samuel' in DEB, ii, 1152

⁵ LPL, MS 2937.

attended: Bates, Abdy and Clayton were 'in the country', Foster and Cecil were absent. 'Only Mrs More, Bacon and Newton were present'.⁵

JH Pratt's 'Notes' begin with a record of a meeting on 8th January 1798 and show the Society consisted of the following members:- The Rev John Newton, the Rev H Foster, the Rev G Pattrick, the Rev Thomas Scott, the Rev R Cecil, the Rev WJ Abdy, the Rev J Venn, the Rev Basil Woodd, the Rev W Goode, the Rev John Davies, and the Rev Josiah Pratt; besides the Rev John Clayton and the Rev J Goode (Dissenting Ministers) and John Bacon, Esq., (layman).⁶

Although membership was restricted in number to thirteen, 'thirteen others living outside the five mile limit were elected annually as Rural Deans and were allowed to attend six times during the year.'⁷ One such 'country member' was Charles Simeon who frequently availed himself of this privilege. SC Orchard comments that in 1807, whilst recovering his health at his brother's house in London, 'As usual he attended the Eclectic Society and most Sundays he went to hear Richard Cecil.'⁸ Another Country member was Charles Grant Esq. Josiah Pratt's significance for the Eclectic Society should not pass unnoticed: 'Pratt

⁶ See Pratt, op. cit., 1.

⁷ Hennell, *John Venn and the Clapham Sect* (1958), 222

⁸ SC Orchard, *English Evangelical Eschatology 1790-1850*, PhD thesis (1969), CUL, MS 6699, 108.

excelled as a ecclesiastical man of business. He may be said to have run the Eclectic Society from 1797-1815'.⁹

Importantly members of 'The Eclectic' saw their *raison d'être* as extending beyond mutual support and edification to engaging with contemporary issues. Thus, the meeting on 19 February 1798 discussed the topic: 'What can be done at the present moment to counteract the Designs of Infidels against Christianity?' Josiah Pratt asserted: 'the control of literature must be the second grand principle [of any new society under consideration]. Literature is at present the great engine acting upon society.'¹⁰

At the close of his 'Notes' Pratt adds another list of forty-seven 'Members and Visitors, whose names appear as speakers during the period of the Society's history – viz., 1798-1814'.¹¹ Eight of the members in this period were at some point rectors of London parishes and five others chaplains or lecturers at London churches.

⁹ Pollard, 'Pratt, Josiah' in DEB, ii, 901.

¹⁰ JH Pratt, op. cit., 12, 13.

¹¹ Pratt, op. cit., 529.

These facts indicate not only a significant growth in Evangelical numbers and influence in London in this period;¹² but also, by the increase in the number of rectors, the beginning of a new respect being shown to Evangelicals. However, equally importantly, it shows the value Evangelicals were placing on regular (fortnightly) 'religious intercourse', by discussion and prayer, which the Eclectic Society stimulated. Furthermore, the Society was of key importance as another sphere in which Newton's personality and gifts could be fully exercised and appreciated. Hindmarsh describes the fortnightly discussions of the Eclectic Society as a formal way 'in which his "connections were enlarged."' ¹³ Newton himself conveyed something of the value of this aspect of the Society: 'Thus there are ten or a dozen of us in London, who frequently meet; we deliberate, ask, and give advice as occasions arise; but the sentiment of one, or even of the whole body, is not binding on any.' ¹⁴ He wrote to one new member at a very early stage: 'Next meeting Monday 14th August. The hour four. No admission after six. Penalty for absence (except the plea is approved by the Society) two shillings and sixpence. The Society has no name and espouses no party.' ¹⁵ This, of

¹² See Pratt's Notes.

¹³ Hindmarsh, *op. cit.*, 310.

¹⁴ J Campbell, *Letters*, 64, 65 cited by Hindmarsh, *op. cit.*, 313.

¹⁵ Martin, *op. cit.*, 322, also cited by Hennell, *John Venn and the Clapham Sect* (1958), 220.

course, was before it became known as 'The Eclectic'. The rules and procedure were to change very little.

Newton's part in the origin, continuance, and significance of the Eclectic Society was unsurpassed. Hindmarsh observed, 'At least twenty years the senior of most other members, Newton was regarded with respect, and his words must have carried especial authority at these meetings.'¹⁶ Nevertheless it should not be supposed that he was entirely dominant. Men like Thomas Scott, Richard Cecil and John Venn also played important parts. Hennell does not hesitate to state that Thomas Scott's 'contribution to the Society was as great as that of Newton or Cecil.'¹⁷ The contact between the London Evangelicals and Charles Simeon also proved to be mutually beneficial. Simeon himself came to be regarded as one of the leaders of the Eclectic Society.

As may be expected, the topic 'What is the Nature of the Inspiration of the Scriptures?' was explored at an Eclectic Society meeting. The nature of the Holy Spirit's superintending activity and the sense in which inspiration was plenary was discussed on 19th January, 1800. J Venn averred: 'Superintendence varied in its character according to

¹⁶ Hindmarsh, *op. cit.*, 313.

¹⁷ Hennell, *op. cit.*, 220.

circumstances'. H Foster stated his belief: 'the writers were influenced not only as to *matter*, but as to *words*.' R Cecil felt 'there is some danger in considering *all* Scripture as *equally* inspired.' T Scott claimed 'Superintendence was necessary, chiefly in preventing man's talents from running into extravagance and error.'¹⁸ The essential biblicism of these men is not in doubt but differences in understanding the nature of divine inspiration did exist. Most would certainly have agreed with the remarks of Charles Simeon in the Preface to his *Horae Homileticae*,¹⁹ where he declares himself to be 'no friend to systematizers in Theology.' Newton himself touches on the question 'How far are the Scriptures reducible to a system?' on 15th March 1790. He comments: 'a revelation from God, must be a system, and a glorious one, but is not proposed to us systematically. General views of harmony, dependence, proportion and subordination are useful and needful. But a strict confinement to systems is not conducive to real improvement, to public usefulness, or to personal comfort, and misrepresents the Gospel to the world.'²⁰ This approximates very closely to the thought of other Eclectics and may be taken as representative of London Evangelicalism of the time. The range of topics discussed was wide and included: Periodical Publications (4th February

¹⁸ See Pratt, op. cit., 152-154.

¹⁹ 21 vols, published 1840.

²⁰ *Eclectic Society Notes* (from Newton's pocket notebook 1787-1789, transcribed by M Rouse, (publication forthcoming), to whom the writer is indebted.

²¹ See Pratt, op. cit., 92 f., 505 f., 507 f.

1799), Difficulties of the Arminian System (13th April 1812), Natural Depravity (1st May 1812).²¹

The Eclectic Society was the first formal expression of Evangelical networking which was to prove so vital to the development of Evangelicalism in London. In a period and ethos of suspicion and hostility it provided for these Evangelicals a forum for mutual society, edification, and encouragement. As Hindmarsh puts it: 'It was the perfect institutional embodiment of his [Newton's] ideals – a non-partisan group of evangelical believers, gathered in a spirit of friendship for "improving" spiritual conversation.' And, again it 'was from its inception, an important focus for extra-ecclesiastical evangelical leadership.'²²

This society, perhaps more than anything else, saved London Evangelicals, in their backs-to-the-wall situation, from simply becoming a religious ghetto. In 1800 they were still numerically very weak, often ignored, misunderstood, or despised, usually without security of office, and with little prospect of preferment.

²² Hindmarsh, *op. cit.*, 313,314.

One of the keys to early London Evangelical development was its direct dependence on popular appeal rather than traditional patronage and the organisation of the Church. The inception of networking was beginning to prove highly significant and was greatly facilitated by Newton's personality and many contacts.

Hannah More (1745-1833) and Her Writings

Hannah More has been described as 'the energetic publicist, author and educator' She was the first woman to make a significant literary impact for Evangelicalism on London. She made her first visit to London in 1774 and soon became associated with the 'Bluestocking' circle, a small group of fashionable intellectuals which included David and Eva Garrick, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Dr Samuel Johnson.¹ During the 1770s and 1780s More wrote a number of plays, poems and other publications and thus became well-known in the London literary scene. It was during this period that she came under the influence of Thomas Scott and also in touch with John Newton and, through him, into close contact with the

¹ See AG Newell, 'More, Hannah' in DEB, ii, 289, 290.

Evangelical community which included William Wilberforce, at Clapham.² Although she would shortly move to Cowslip Green near Bristol, she retained her famous friendships and other London contacts and spent several months each year with such as Eva Garrick.

In 1781 More was presented with Newton's two-volume *Cardiphonia* and it was in these, 'so full of "vital, experimental religion" and "rational and consistent piety"',³ perhaps, that she found the key to a more fulfilling existence. *Cardiphonia*, however, did not secure More's immediate conversion; but it helped to 'set her feet on a new path.'⁴ It was not until 1788 that she publicly announced her new religious views. Newton remained her spiritual adviser. However, although her literary reputation was by now well established, More gradually abandoned London literary society and devoted her literary talents increasingly to moral and religious topics. She was indeed 'One of the best-known and prolific polemicists of her day.'⁵ After 1789 her major contribution in London was through her

² RH Campbell, 'More, Hannah' in NIDCC, 676, 677.

³ W Roberts, *Memoirs of the Life and Correspondence of Hannah More* (1834), i, 188, cited by A Stott, op. cit. 83.

⁴ See Rosman, op. cit., 52, 53, citing *Coelebs in Search of a Wife* (1808/9), ii, 32.

⁵ Cannon, 'More, Hannah' in OCBH, 655.

pen.⁶ More and Newton maintained a correspondence well into the 1800s even though, in his letter to her in the summer of 1800, he said 'Probably this will be my last letter to you...' Newton continued to befriend her with gifts of books and occasional advice.⁷ Her close contacts with him, the Clapham Group, and Bishop Porteus, continued.

More's general attitude to cultural activities which appealed to the senses and to the passions was one of disapproval. She deprecated the ethos of a society which encouraged sensual dissipation, and she regarded mental activity as the road to moral reformation. As an Evangelical she continued to assert the superiority of intellectual over sensual activity. The underlying thought for More is that anything which tends to inspire contempt for what is frivolous and to promote rational interests, ultimately promotes the interests of Christianity.

In 1788 More published, originally anonymously, her *Thoughts on the Importance of the Manners of the Great to General Society*.⁸ Stott has summarised her intention: 'More's fundamental target was neither the

⁶ A full list all of her writings is given by Stott, op. cit., 337-340.

⁷ See Martin, op. cit., 334, 346.

⁸ 1788 (8th edn., 1792).

disorderly poor, nor the incorrigible gamblers of Devonshire House ('the raffish set that congregated round the duchess of Devonshire and Charles James Fox'), but the religious complacency of the respectable, those who "may be termed *good kind of people*....persons of rank and fortune who live within the restraints of moral obligation and acknowledge the truth of the Christian religion".⁹

The rich had failed to recognize their obligations to those below them, as instanced by the hairdressers being precluded from church by employment on Sundays. Bishop Porteus congratulated her on her 'delicious morsel' and he, with John Newton and John Wesley, held the view that she was the only 'serious' author whose writings appealed to sophisticated readers.¹⁰ More propounded the view that 'Reformation must begin with the GREAT, or it will never be effectiveTo expect the poor to reform while the opulent are corrupt , is to throw odours into the stream while the springs are poisoned.'¹¹ As late as 1825 Mary Hamilton (an attendant to George III's daughters) acknowledged the positive impression of this work on her. She was also a serious reader of *An Estimate of the Religion of the Fashionable World*, (1791) as, it

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ See Newell, op. cit., 789.

¹¹ *Manners of the Great* (1788), 117.

appears, was Queen Charlotte who lent the book to Fanny Burney (1752-1840). In 1782 More had complained to Mary Hamilton about 'the lack of religion in Fanny Burney's novels.' Fanny Burney had found More's book was 'very laudable ... but it sometimes points out imperfections almost unavoidable, with amendments almost impracticable.'¹² Walpole, by contrast, disapproved of her 'Puritanism'. The book tactfully exposed many evil customs and habits not fully understood by those who followed them.¹³

An Estimate was More's second major conduct book and it reached a 5th edition by 1793. In many respects this was an enlargement of the major themes of *Manners of the Great*, being an attack on luxury, a critique of fashionable society and a summons to self-denying Christianity. More inveighed against the existing social and spiritual malaise, and "practical irreligion", which she deemed more dangerous than outright scepticism.¹⁴ In her *Practical Piety, or the Influence of the Religion of the Heart on the Life and Manners* (2 vols.1811) she acknowledges God's providential dealings with believers but also stresses the importance of good works in Christian living. Hence, 'To suppose that the blood of Christ redeems us from sin, while Sin continues to pollute the Soul, is to suppose....that it

¹² Stott, op. cit., 97, 98.

¹³ See Elliott-Binns, op. cit., 337.

¹⁴ See Stott, op.cit., 131.

acts like an amulet, an incantation, a talisman, which is to produce its effect by operating on the imagination and not on the disease.'¹⁵ For More God's grace, authentically received, far from encouraging antinomianism, actually inspires obedience.

Mention must also be made of her *Cheap Repository Tracts* (1795-1798). It was through these tracts, 'full of pious moralisms and cautionary tales about those who failed to absorb them' ¹⁶, that she targeted the lower classes. In respect of these G Himmelfarb speaks of the 'democratizing effect of Evangelicalism' indicating that every class of society was influenced by Evangelicalism ¹⁷ This was certainly one of More's aims. With some help from her sisters and friends, for three years, she produced three tracts a month (a tale, a ballad, and a tract for Sunday) which were sold for a penny. These were later published in three volumes. It was their success and the folding-up of her *Family Magazine* which contributed to the formation of the *Religious Tract Society* in 1799. ¹⁸ Their anti-Jacobin slant led to their support by several bishops. More appears to have enlisted the help of Henry Thornton, the London philanthropist, for the large financial support required in this enterprise. She had already

¹⁵ H More, *Practical Piety* (1811), i, 55.

¹⁶ Newsome, op. cit., 192.

¹⁷ Himmelfarb, *Victorian Minds*, 280, see Newsome, op. cit., 192.

¹⁸ See Hole, op. cit., 387.

published her *Village Politics* in 1793, of which JH Pratt later commented 'many thousands were circulated in London alone....and men of the soundest judgment went so far as to affirm, that it had most essentially contributed under Providence, to prevent a revolution.' ¹⁹

The Tracts were far more widely read than either books or newspapers. More than two million were sold in this country in one year.²⁰ Her plan was to promote good morals among the poor with a view to 'the circulation of useful knowledge' to counter 'the channel of vulgar and licentious publications'. ²¹

More's *Moral Sketches* (published in 1819) was the last of her series of moral and religious treatises and became required reading in all literate households for some years. More asserts 'In this worldthe Christian is to live, through divine assistance, untainted by its maxims, uncontaminated by its practices'.²² The Christian must not only never engage in an employment which is illicit, but in every licit profession 'It requires strict watchfulness ... to conduct the most useful undertaking in

¹⁹ Pratt, op. cit., 14.

²⁰ See Hennell, *John Venn and the Clapham Sect* (1958), 196.

²¹ See Stott, op. cit., 174.

²² *Moral Sketches*, 347.

a right spirit and with a constant eye to Him, to whom every intelligent being is accountable' ²³.

It is essential to note More's insistence that the Christian should understand the central importance of the Bible: 'It is perfect in its nature, intelligible in its construction, and eternal in its obligation. This sacred institute he will consult, not occasionally, but daily.' ²⁴ The Christian 'has but one standard of judging, but one measure of conduct – the infallible word of God. This rule he will not bend it to his own convenience, he will not accommodate it to his own views, his own passions, his own emolument, his own reputation.' ²⁵

Of great importance to More was the Christian's proper appreciation and observance of Sunday. 'Instead of appropriating it as a day of premeditated conviviality, he converts it into a stated season of enjoyment of another kind.....He considers the observance as almost more his privilege than his duty'.²⁶ It is easy to understand how her evangelicalism

²³ Ibid., 349.

²⁴ Ibid., 351.

²⁵ Ibid., 352.

²⁶ Ibid., 358.

often seemed to the poor as largely about interference with traditional pleasures.

Because of her continuing London contacts her writings may be seen as an important commentary on the London social and moral scene. Whilst her works clearly met with much episcopal and Evangelical approval, it is difficult to assess their practical impact. Certainly there was no dramatic or immediate effect on society. P Ackroyd, in his only reference to More, says simply: 'the pieties of Hannah More raised her above any disapprobation, and indeed she exercised an influence not unlike that of an abbess in early medieval London'.²⁷; but makes no reference to any practical impact.

TW Laqueur speaks of her 'condescending statements'²⁸ but he was writing particularly of her hierarchical educational views which were shared by many of her contemporaries. Such critics fail to take account of the prevailing attitudes in the static and rigidly stratified society of her time. EP Thompson's view²⁹ that her tracts would have made little impact is unduly prejudiced.

²⁷ P Ackroyd, *London, the Biography* (2001), 633.

²⁸ TW Laqueur, *Religion and Respectability: Sunday Schools and Working Class Culture* (1976), 12.

²⁹ *The Making of the English Working Class* (Harmondsworth, 1963).

It is noteworthy that JCD Clark states: 'radical historians have, not without justification, always singled out Hannah More for special vituperation' but he decisively rejects Victor E Neuburg's view that 'For the majority of the population they could hardly have been palatable, and the identification of political repression with this kind of Christianity peddled in tracts must have done a great deal to turn the minds of some working men to infidelity and atheism.'³⁰ Clark sharply remarks: 'the suggestion is wholly unsubstantiated',³¹ citing Roy Porter's observation: 'Cascades of cheap Anglican literature, from the *New Whole Duty of Man* to Hannah More's uplifting tracts, peddled religion to the poor' as 'soup-kitchen religion from above.'³²

It was, then, More's 'skilful and persuasive pen' which led to her becoming known as Evangelicalism's 'leading publicist'.³³ Like the Countess of Huntingdon earlier, she is a notable example of a lay woman exercising considerable influence, albeit of a very different kind, on

³⁰ *Popular Literature: A History and Guide* (Harmondsworth, 1977), 256.

³¹ Clark, *op. cit.*, 246.

³² Porter, *English Society in the Eighteenth Century* (Harmondsworth, 1982), 191-3, 372-3.

³³ See Marshall, *Industrial England 1776-1851*, 119.

London Evangelicalism. Certainly More's impact on Bishop Porteus was in stark contrast to that of Lady Huntingdon. His great respect for her is indicated in his letter of March 6, 1799, which begins: 'My dear Mrs More' and expresses; 'my extreme concern at the alarming accounts I have lately heard of your state of health.'³⁴ Also, like Charles Simeon, she is a notable example of a non-resident making a significant contribution to the London Evangelical cause.

William Wilberforce, the Clapham Group and his 'Practical View'

Whereas the Eclectic Society, effectively under Newton's leadership, was predominantly a clerical group of Evangelicals, the Clapham Sect (so named by Sir James Stephen in 1844) was predominantly a lay group. Almost certainly the group would have repudiated the description 'sect' and certainly members did not see themselves as separating from the Established Church. EJ Evans aptly points out: 'The Clapham Sect worked to reform the Church of England from within and thus to revitalize the Christian message.'¹ The Sect's life is usually considered

³⁴ LPL, 13, ff., 305, 306.

¹ EJ Evans. *The Forging of the Modern State 1783-1870* (2001), 591.

to coincide with the period when John Venn was incumbent of Clapham Parish 1792-1813. John Venn (1759-1813) was the son of Henry Venn (1724-1797) who had been curate of Clapham (1754-1759) before his appointment in Huddersfield where he became more famous.

It is impossible in a brief space to go into detail regarding the origin and development of this group.² An early account of the men involved may be found in the Essay by Sir James Stephen in his *Essays in Ecclesiastical History* (1849).³ The membership of this famous fellowship of outstanding laymen comprised William Wilberforce (1759-1833) and others almost equally distinguished: Sir John Shore, Lord Teignmouth (1751-1834) (formerly Governor-General of India), Zachary Macaulay (Governor of Sierra Leone from 1794-1799), Henry Thornton (1760-1815) (a wealthy banker), Charles Grant (Chairman of the East India Company), and James Stephen (an extremely able advocate). These men lived for a while in a close friendship at Clapham. The names of Granville Sharpe, Hannah More ('the honorary man of Clapham')⁴ should also be included. All these were committed to the abolition of the slave trade and

² A fuller treatment may be found in Hennell, *John Venn and the Clapham Sect* (1958).

³ ii, 287-382.

⁴ Stott, op. cit., 192.

the spread of "vital religion". They became known as the Saints and their group solidarity was extraordinary, some considered it sinister. 'For all its many virtues and great reforming energies, some viewed the sect as having many of the characteristics of a cosy coterie.'⁵ However, equally, they commended Evangelicalism to a stratum of society which hitherto had generally regarded Evangelical religion with disapprobation. Larner remarks: that 'Combined in this coterie were piety, wealth, eloquence, knowledge of men, legal acumen, business experience, and Parliamentary influence such as made their united action irresistible.'⁶

The central interest of their lives was the practice of the Christian faith. These people were more concerned about holiness than anything else and believed it is the duty of the Church uncompromisingly to point out to the State and to society the requirements of the law of God. They believed in the reality of 'the conscience of a Christian nation.' Although rich and prosperous and living in comfort, they also practised an almost monastic austerity, rising early and giving much time to prayer and Bible reading and self-examination. They consecrated themselves to good works and noble causes. Their watchwords were diligence, simplicity, and

⁵ See Stott, loc. cit.

⁶ Larner in DECH, 218.

generosity. Henry Thornton habitually gave away two-thirds of his income, and in the midst of his busy practical life found time to spend three hours a day in prayer.⁷

The official classes generally viewed them as dangerous revolutionaries, but 'they were nothing of the sort. They were indeed full of benevolence and philanthropy towards the poor – "the lower orders" – but they believed they should be kept in their place.'⁸ In short, they used 'acquired powers of patronage to revive parochial life, and engaged themselves in good works as a vital element of their faith.'⁹

Hill speaks of the 'new evangelicalism' which became widely recognised as the ethos of the Clapham Community: This was both a full gospel of salvation and a full commitment to social action: 'Theirs was not merely a gospel of personal morality and neither was it a revolutionary political agenda of social change.'¹⁰ Thus it was that a passing phase of curiosity

⁷ Neill, op. cit., 238, 239.

⁸ AR Vidler, *The Church in an Age of Revolution* (Harmondsworth, 1971) 37,38.

⁹ A Porter, 'The 18th Century Church' in H Chadwick and GR Evans (eds.) *Atlas of the Christian Church* (1987), 139.

¹⁰ See Hill, *The Wilberforce Connection* (Oxford, 2004), 148.

about Evangelicalism, as had been aroused by Whitefield's preaching, moved to a really practical interest among the affluent classes.¹¹

Whilst, indisputably, Wilberforce was the leading member of the group, there is no doubt that John Venn was regarded by the group as their spiritual leader. Thus, Sir James Stephen refers to 'John Venn, to whom the whole sect looked up as their pastor and spiritual guide'.¹² 'The theology [of Venn's sermons] is representative of the sober, ethical, non-dogmatic evangelicalism of Clapham.' Elucidating Clapham's evangelical philanthropy, he proclaims 'every doctrine is to be brought to action, and is important and valuable to us only as it produces corresponding and appropriate disposition.'¹³ Hennell remarks: 'his sermons were a continual source of enlightenment, spiritual strength and occasional debate amongst these friends.'¹⁴ In short, he was their 'prophet, instructor and spiritual guide.' Their 'other-worldliness' was also a feature of the group and this was sustained and continually renewed by the ministry of John Venn.¹⁵ None of the group, however, 'had, or

¹¹ See Overton 'The Evangelical Revival' in CJ Abbey and JH Overton, op. cit., 396.

¹² Op. cit., 343.

¹³ Ervine, 'Venn, John' in DEB, ii, 1140.

¹⁴ *John Venn and the Clapham Sect* (1958), 198.

¹⁵ See Hennell, op. cit., 214.

professed to have, the slightest pretensions to be called theologians.’¹⁶ For theological guidance the group appears to have looked to Cambridge in the persons of Simeon and Isaac Milner (1750-1820). The latter, having been instrumental in Wilberforce’s conversion, was by now ‘the intellectual chief of his party’. ¹⁷ Wilberforce, however, as we have seen was also certainly influenced by Newton and he regularly attended Scott’s preaching, ‘and thought him the best minister we ever heard’ ¹⁸ Surely, says Overton, ‘all his religious impressions were derived from the Evangelical school. Joseph and Isaac Milner, John Newton, and Thomas Scott affected him spiritually more than any other men.’ ¹⁹ Of Wilberforce’s position in the Evangelical party, Overton claims: ‘though he was neither the head nor the founder of the Evangelical party, he contributed more than any other man could do to its prestige and influence, especially in circles into which its real heads and founders could not easily find access.’ ²⁰

It needs to be recognised that of all the nineteenth-century Evangelicals, it was the Clapham Evangelicals who were most aware of social distinctions and eager to esteem highly “those who count in society”.

¹⁶ Overton, op. cit., 395.

¹⁷ Sir James Stephen, op. cit., 366.

¹⁸ BL MSS Loan 57. XI, 1179, cited by Pollock, *Wilberforce*, 66.

¹⁹ Overton, *The Evangelical Revival* (1898), 9.

²⁰ Overton, loc. cit.

They were in Ford K Brown's phrase, "firm believers in the sacredness of rank, position, office, and property and profoundly respecters of persons"²¹ This, of course, may have been helpful in commending their faith to persons of high rank but, equally, may have been repellent to the metropolitan proletariat.

In general, the humanitarian action of the Clapham Sect regarding the slave trade has been applauded; but not so their alleged moral puritanism, and even less their political position.²² That they did accept the hierarchical assumptions and prejudices of nearly all of the upper classes of their time is largely beyond dispute. However, it is important to see them as men of their age and judge them in their particular context. Probably few could have escaped the narrowness of vision peculiar to their upbringing and times. It is important not to lose sight of their intellectual liberality and sense of dedication.²³

Whatever may be said of a personal piety of 'a somewhat glutinous sort', there is no doubt that they found in vital Christianity 'an imperative to charitable benefaction'. Their philanthropy extended to a wide range of social causes; but it is also true that they believed reformation of character

²¹ See *Fathers of the Victorians*, 155.

²² See Royle, op. cit., 306.

²³ See Webb, op. cit., 128, 129.

was inseparable from amelioration of condition. This didactic trait has also been deprecated by many historians.²⁴

Undoubtedly, in the abolition movement, it was the Clapham sect which took the most prominent part, and this was to be their greatest glory.²⁵ In the popular mind this has been largely attributed to Wilberforce, and there is no question that Wilberforce did play the most conspicuous part in the struggle, largely because of his eloquent speeches in the House of Commons. However, it has been recognised for some time that Thomas Clarkson (1760-1846) also played a major and vital part. In spite of much hostility at first, the abolition movement largely won respect, even popular favour, for Evangelicals; although it should be remembered there were few movements at home and abroad for the good of mankind in which the Clapham group did not take some part.²⁶

Wolffe's observation: 'Wilberforce was intensely loyal to the Church of England, seeing it as the essential safeguard of the Christian fabric of the state', suggests Wilberforce would have been *persona grata* to many. However, Wolffe also mentions his leadership was not without cost: 'To

²⁴ See Evans, op. cit., 64.

²⁵ See Patterson, op. cit., 396.

²⁶ See Stock, *The English Church in the Nineteenth Century*, 15.

evangelicals he was a seminal leader and inspiration, a man of committed faith and integrity, who at great personal cost followed the call of Christ to help the oppressed abroad and proclaim the moral and spiritual imperatives of the gospel at home.’²⁷

Regarding their effectiveness, John Wolffe has recently identified certain keys: one was in ‘their very independence and capacity for extensive networking’. This networking activity certainly operated within the capital but also extended beyond it. The other was their forming of ‘effective working relationships, and in some cases genuine friendships with central secular figures.’²⁸

Wilberforce’s ‘Practical View’

Stott asserts: ‘The publication of Wilberforce’s *Practical View* in April 1797 turned out to be one of the most significant events in the history of the Clapham sect, and the book was soon established as the classic text of Evangelical Anglican theology.’²⁹ She is referring to his *A Practical View of the Prevailing Religious System of Professed Christians, in the*

²⁷ Wolffe, ‘Wilberforce, William’ in ODNB (2004).

²⁸ Wolffe, ‘Clapham Sect’ in ODNB (2005 supplement).

²⁹ Stott, op. cit., 204.

*Higher and Middle Classes in this Country, contrasted with Real Christianity,*³⁰

Its primary challenge was to those who accepted the Christian creed but neglected to live the life. Wilberforce's purpose in publishing such a book met with embarrassed comment from his friends, who realised his sincerity but thought it must do him harm. His publisher thought there would be no public for it, but if the author would put his name on the title page he was prepared to risk five hundred copies.³¹ In the event, by midsummer the book had become almost a 'best-seller.' A fifth edition appeared in August, making a total of 7,500 copies. The demand continued and Balleine claimed that 'forty editions in twenty-seven years' were published.³² The book certainly became a classic but whether it should be regarded as a text of theology is disputable. Probably it is better to describe it as a valuable guide to practical Christianity. It has been described as 'a Biblical view, presented intelligibly if haphazardly.'³³

³⁰ (1797, 3rd ed.) For a similar view see CJ Stranks, 'A Practical View' in *Anglican Devotion* (1961), 203.

³¹ Stranks, op. cit., 210.

³² Op. cit., 157.

³³ Pollock, *Wilberforce: God's Statesman* (Eastbourne, 2001), 147-149.

The book originated from the conviction that it is the duty of everyone to promote the happiness of his fellow creatures. A man would need to be very hardhearted to refrain from seeking actively to help those he respects and loves turn from wrongdoing to a new way of life. In Wilberforce's view, the effect of rationalism had been more or less to reduce religion to a code of behaviour whereby Christian morality was presented as a prudent way of living which leads to happiness in this world and equanimity about the next, rather than as a reflection of the character of God.³⁴

Wilberforce, at the outset, says the main object is not to persuade the sceptic or to answer the arguments of those who oppose the fundamental doctrines of Christianity; but to point out the inadequate and erroneous system of the majority of those purporting to be orthodox Christians and to contrast their defective scheme with Wilberforce's representation of real Christianity.³⁵ Starting with 'Inadequate Conceptions of the importance of Christianity'³⁶, he moves on to the 'Corruption of Human Nature.' Thence, he stresses the importance of an adequate view of faith, the reality³⁷ of judgement, the corruption of human nature, and the

³⁴ See Stranks, *op. cit.*

³⁵ See Coupland, *Wilberforce* (1945), 193.

³⁶ *Practical View* (1797), 7-23.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 24-61.

doctrine of a personal Devil ³⁸ He dilates on the 'Chief Defects of the Religious System of the Bulk of professed Christians, in what regards our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit – with a Dissertation concerning the use of Passions in Religion'³⁹ maintaining that true religion has been steadily declining in England. He enlarges further 'On the Prevailing Inadequate Conceptions concerning the Nature and the Strictness of Practical Christianity.'⁴⁰ The true Christian, Wilberforce avers, recognises that the doctrine of grace is 'the cardinal point on which the whole of Christianity turns,' and that 'an absolute surrender of soul and body to the will and service of God' is the only hope for salvation.' Thus he dwells 'On the Excellence of Christianity in Certain Important Particulars. Argument which results thence in Proof of its Divine Origin.' Wilberforce then turns to a 'Brief Enquiry into the Present State of Christianity'⁴¹ in this Country, Its Importance to us as a Political Community, And Practical Hints for which the Foregoing Consideration gives Occasion'.⁴² Finally, he gives 'Practical Hints to Various Descriptions of Persons.'⁴³

³⁸ Ibid., 13-61.

³⁹ Ibid., 62-138.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 139-348.

⁴¹ Ibid., 349-363.

⁴² Ibid., 364-422.

⁴³ Ibid., 423-end.

In all this Wilberforce's appeal is always to the Bible. However, one of his chief purposes is to break down the intense suspicion of religious emotion which characterised his times. He argues: 'Because the emotions run to extreme in some people they are not to be excluded from the operations of divine grace, which makes love for God 'a deep and quiet passion exercising itself continually in works of unselfish charity.' ⁴⁴

Wilberforce is quite clear that it is by the operation of the Holy Spirit that we all grow in grace. Further, whilst he certainly encourages the proper exercise of reason, in regard to the atonement he stresses it is not necessary to understand it completely, but to lay hold of its benefits for ourselves by faith, and thereby find peace and joy in believing. He even contended that it was only through the emotions that the mass of illiterate people of his day could be reached.⁴⁵

Underlying the entire work is his awareness of the totally inadequate nature of conventional religion. In formal religion there is no true realisation of the guilt of sin. Nowhere does Wilberforce plead that a Christian go out of the world, always he urges that he should live and work in it with constant reference to God. The only religion worth having,

⁴⁴ Stranks, op. cit., 216.

⁴⁵ Stranks, op. cit., 226.

in his view, 'is that which consists in entire surrender to the love of God shown to us in Christ, and in the dedicated life which springs from such committal.⁴⁶ It is to the decline of Religion and Morality that our national difficulties must, both directly and indirectly, be largely ascribed. He claims that true Christianity, from its essential nature, is adapted to promote the preservation and healthfulness of political communities.

Bishops in general, and some statesmen, approved the book: 'It was little marvellous that ecclesiastics of every rank and section greeted with the loudest applause the advent of an ally at once so powerful and so unexpected.'⁴⁷ Thus, for example, Bishop Porteous told Wilberforce: 'I am truly thankful to providence that a work of this nature has made its appearance at this tremendous moment,'⁴⁸ and the statesman Edmund Burke (1729-1797) was said to have stated on his death-bed that if he lived, 'he should thank Wilberforce for having sent such a book in to the world.'⁴⁹ The book was enthusiastically received by Evangelicals, not least in London. Newton said: 'I deem it the most valuable and important

⁴⁶ Stranks, op. cit., 227.

⁴⁷ Stephen, op. cit., 253.

⁴⁸ Cited by Coupland, op. cit., 197.

⁴⁹ Thornton MSS, H Thornton to H More, letter (Oct.1798, 208) cited by Pollock, op. cit.; also Stephen, *Essays* (1849), 253.

publication of the present age.’⁵⁰ Richard Cecil rejoiced ‘that a man of your character can get a hearing where we [priests] cannot, and the truth should be so clearly and forcibly presented when the motive cannot possibly be suspected.’⁵¹ According to the ecclesiastical historian Dr J Stoughton, Legh Richmond (1772-1827), who, subsequently and briefly, was assistant chaplain at the Lock Hospital in 1805, was converted by reading Wilberforce’s *Practical View*.⁵² Evidence of the continuing value placed on it by later London Evangelicals is shown by the inclusion of an ‘Introductory Essay’ (i-lxxvi) by Daniel Wilson (Sr) with the publication of the 1829 edition.

We should note that Daniel Wilson declined to ascribe to *A Pactical View* ‘the general revival of religion in our country’ for ‘The common people had been already roused’⁵³ but he does maintain: ‘The general standard of religious doctrine and practice in our country has been rising since the

⁵⁰ Coupland, loc. cit., 197.

⁵¹ Cited by Pollock, *Wilberforce* (2000), 147.

⁵² J Stoughton, *Religion in England 1800-1850* (1884), i, 121.

⁵³ Wilson, ‘Introductory Essay’ (1826) to Wilberforce’s *Practical View*, xlv.

publication of this work.’⁵⁴ It did help to reverse a trend. Wilson, nevertheless, urges that we do ‘not forget the numerous defects and sins which are still prevalent in the visible Church..’⁵⁵

Initially the *Practical View* appears to have been well received by High Churchmen. Ford K Brown remarks: ‘Though *Practical Christianity* was a direct statement of a religion still close to Calvinism.....the High Church party received his book for several months with nothing but praise.’⁵⁶

Wilson also maintained that early opposition to *A Practical View* ‘gave it additional circulation and currency. Men were surprised at what Christianity was described to be: they were offended at the picture given of spiritual religion: they were dismayed at the representation of the distance to which modern Christianity had receded from its ancient limits.’⁵⁷ No doubt Wilberforce’s social position, oratory and political prominence helped to commend it; but it was his reminder that ‘nominal

⁵⁴ Ibid., xlvii.

⁵⁵ Ibid., lvii, lxii.

⁵⁶ Brown, op. cit., 117.

⁵⁷ Wilson, op. cit., xix.

Christianity' was not enough which came at precisely the right time. Its relevance was inescapable.

Whilst the differences between the leadership of Newton and Wilberforce, as also between the aims and achievements of the Eclectic Society and the Clapham Group, are manifest, there is both overlap and continuity of Anglican Evangelicalism to be seen. It was the networking operating in both London groups which was the major factor in the formation of the evangelical societies which we shortly explore.

Geographically, Clapham parish was very much on the periphery of the London of our period, nevertheless it did come within the environs of the metropolis. However, the spheres of influence of the group's members were very much bound up with life at Westminster or the City. Furthermore, the bold Evangelical witness of individual members was coupled with an altruism evidenced in practical philanthropy and piety, which many, but by no means all, found attractive. Evangelicalism was now being perceived in a more favourable light in the public mind both in and outside of London. One might almost speak of a religious and cultural osmosis. This osmotic effect was mutually beneficial both to

London and the country at large. In this particular respect the Clapham Sect could be said to have been more influential than the Eclectic Society.

We can now emphatically state that it is erroneous to assert, with Canon JH Overton, that there was hardly a single layman who had the position of a leader of the first rank in the Evangelical Movement.⁵⁸ We thus concur with the opposing view of FK Brown.⁵⁹

The Church Missionary Society

It may seem strange to include the founding and early years of an overseas missionary society as significant for the progress of Anglican Evangelicalism in London. However, the Society's origins and development were closely linked with London Evangelicalism and it thus served as a major network to strengthen and enable the growth of London Evangelicalism. It could be said there was a degree of mutual dependence

⁵⁸ See Overton, *The Evangelical Revival in the Eighteenth Century* (1898).

⁵⁹ Brown, op. cit., 117.

between the two, indeed a symbiotic relationship. Although it was not until the end of the nineteenth century that CMS became 'a phenomenon of commanding import in our Evangelical history'¹, its later growth could hardly have occurred without the early vision, enthusiasm and energy of the small group of London Evangelicals.

The origin of the Church Missionary Society is to be traced to a meeting of members of the Eclectic Society. In C Hole's words: 'The attention of its members was soon directed to the question of propagating the Gospel in foreign parts, in Botany Bay, in the East Indies and in Africa.' This led the Eclectic Society to discuss the question: "With what propriety and in what mode can a mission be attempted to the heathen, from the Established Church?" This was proposed by Charles Simeon and led, at a meeting held on the 18th February, 1799, to the chairman, John Venn, proposing the formation of a missionary society for this object.' ² This was considered at a further meeting in the Castle and Falcon hotel in Aldersgate Street on 12 April 1799. This further meeting was chaired by John Venn when sixteen clergymen and nine laymen were present. For

¹ HCG Moule, *The Evangelical School in the Church of England* (1901), 6.

² Hole, op. cit., 386.

our purpose it is sufficient to note the four resolutions which were adopted, as indicated by E Stock.³

1. 'That it is a duty highly incumbent upon every Christian to endeavour to propagate the knowledge of the Gospel among the Heathen.'

2. 'That as it appears from the printed Reports of the Societies for Propagating the Gospel and for Promoting Christian Knowledge that those respectable societies confine their labours to the British Plantations in America and to the West Indies there seems to be still wanting in the Established Church a *Society for Sending missionaries to the Continent of Africa, or the other parts of the Heathen world.*'

3. 'That the persons present at this meeting do form themselves into a Society for that purpose, and that the following rules be adopted.' [In the original Minutes the Rules follow]

4. 'That a Deputation be sent from this Society to the Archbishop of Canterbury as Metropolitan, the Bishop of London as Diocesan, and the Bishop of Durham as Chairman of the Mission Committee of the Society

for Promoting Christian Knowledge, with a copy of the Rules of the Society and a respectful letter.’

What stands out from the formulation of these resolutions is their clarity of purpose, decisiveness of action and propriety of procedure. Here we see Evangelicals demonstrating responsibility in responding to a Gospel imperative and, at the same time, having due respect for ecclesiastical authority. No doubt these features played some part in the growing respect in which they were increasingly coming to be held.

Hindmarsh is correct in speaking of the Eclectic Society as becoming famous as ‘the matrix’ of the CMS.⁴ However, we should note E Stock’s reference to ‘the “Clapham” men’, when he states: ‘It is usual to credit them withthe establishment of the CMS and the Bible Society’⁵ and also E Royle’s remark; ‘... within the Established Church, the Clapham Sect in 1799 started what was to become the Church Missionary Society.’⁶ These statements might seem to contradict Hindmarsh’s

⁴ Hindmarsh, op. cit., 313.

⁵ Stock, *The English Church in the Nineteenth Century* (1910), 15.

assertion; but it needs only to be remembered that many members of the Clapham group were in regular touch with members of the Eclectic Society. The possibility of founding a missionary society was first raised informally at an Eclectics meeting. It was this that led to a formal meeting on 18th February 1799 at which John Venn presided and indeed proposed the original motion. He was, of course, the spiritual leader of the Clapham group and, by now, virtual leader of the Eclectic Society.⁷ Here is a good example of the early networking which was to become increasingly prominent. It is quite possible that there had been informal discussion about the possibility of forming a society by some 'Claphamites' before it was raised at an Eclectics meeting, or indeed *vice versa*. At any rate, there had probably been an earlier preliminary meeting which led to the convening of that on the 18th February.

Stock points out that at the first meeting of the infant CMS some ardent Evangelical leaders, such as Simeon, Cecil, Grant, and H Thornton, were not present.⁸ The following officers were appointed: Vice-Presidents; William Wilberforce (having declined to be President), Sir R Hill, Bt,

⁶ Royle, *op. cit.*, 317.

⁷ See Hennell, *John Venn and the Clapham Sect* (1958), 231.

⁸ Stock, *op. cit.*, 68.

MP, Vice-Admiral Gambier, Charles Grant, Henry Hoare (a career banker who became a senior partner in Hoare's Bank in 1787), Edward Parry, and Samuel Thornton, MP, Treasurer; Henry Thornton.

The appointed Committee comprised four beneficed clergy [W Goode (St Anne's, Blackfriars), John Newton (St Mary Woolnoth), Dr JW Peers (Morden), John Venn (Clapham)], four licensed to proprietary chapels [R Cecil (St John, Bedford Row), E Cuthbert (Long Acre Chapel), Thomas Scott (Lock Chapel), Basil Woodd (Bentinck Chapel, Marylebone)], two curates (WJ Abdy (St John, Horsley Down), J Pratt (St John, Bedford Row)], three lecturers (J Davies, H Foster, G Pattrick). Included in the eleven prominent laymen appointed were J Brasier (merchant), W Cardale (solicitor), N Downer (merchant), A Martin (banker), J Pearson (surgeon), H Stokes (merchant), and W Wilson (silk-merchant). It is noteworthy that the entire committee consisted of London men in order to facilitate speedy action.

Later, 26 'country members', including Simeon, were elected. Soon to be appointed, on account of vacancies through death, were Samuel Crowther (Vicar of Christ Church, Newgate) and Zachary Macaulay (formerly Governor of Sierra Leone, and editor of the *Christian Observer*). Venn

was elected chairman, and Thomas Scott acted as secretary. Scott was succeeded after two years by Josiah Pratt.⁹ For twelve years Committee meetings were held in William Goode's study at St Andrew's Rectory.

Progress for the CMS at first was slow. There were difficulties regarding the proposed appointment of 'catechists' (lay evangelists) and Newton was among the objectors. Indeed, there was disagreement about whether to proceed at all after Archbishop John Moore's response to John Venn's *Account*. That he was 'favourably disposed' but 'cautious not to commit himself' was conveyed through Wilberforce to the Committee. However, Pratt had been able to report: 'The Archbishop and the Bishop of London ... encouraged us to proceed and promised to regard our proceedings with kindness ...' although, apparently, not yet their full approbation.¹⁰ However, after much heart-searching, the strong lead of Venn and Scott was followed and 'the decisive resolution was adopted: "That in consequence of the answer from the Metropolitan [presumably its warmth and friendly tone], the Committee do now proceed in their great design with all the activity possible."' ¹¹

⁹ See Stock, op. cit., 69, 70.

¹⁰ See Stock, op. cit., 73.

The early expectations of a high level of support on the part of London Evangelicals is indicated by a letter of Thomas Scott's wife to her son at Hull after the first Annual Sermon in 1801 (which, in fact, was two years after the Society's birth). Thomas Scott was the preacher on Whit Tuesday, May 26th at 11.00 a.m., at St Anne's, Blackfriars. Mrs. Scott wrote, disappointedly: 'We did expect a crowded church on this most important occasion; but alas! Our hopes were damped.'¹² The weather was bad and it being a week-day, there were only 'some four hundred persons assembled'.¹³ Nevertheless, the CMS Annual Sermon did become extremely popular and proved to be an annual rallying-point for Evangelicals, especially in London. Stock has pointed out that the early Anniversaries were markedly different from those of later years: 'The Sermon was the principal thing; the Meeting was quite secondary, so far as public interest was concerned. Almost from the first, it was *de rigueur* for men and women from the few Evangelical congregations in London to hear the Sermon, which was preached in the forenoon.'¹⁴ Evangelicals

¹¹ Stock, loc. cit..

¹² Cited by Stock, op. cit., 76.

¹³ Stock, op. cit., 76.

¹⁴ Stock, op. cit., 75.

owed an immense debt to the CMS as a unifying force.¹⁵ and the importance of the CMS for the development of Evangelicalism generally, and London Evangelicalism particularly, cannot be overstated. Anne Stott expresses it thus: The CMS 'was a new type of creature, marking the decisive arrival of the Evangelical Anglicans – the Clapham sect and beyond – on the religious scene.'¹⁶ In particular, Thomas Scott's positive and considerable contribution to CMS, especially as the first secretary for two years should not be underestimated.

This new development in the Church of England caused anxiety to old-fashioned High Churchmen, especially in the use of 'catechists' (lay evangelists), albeit overseas. This would prove highly significant later in the formation of the Church-Pastoral Aid Society.

The founding of the Church Missionary Institution (later College) at Islington, in 1825 (at the suggestion of Pratt in 1822), was also of some significance, though minor, for London Evangelicalism. Later, Bishop Blomfield commented that he had been 'much struck with the

¹⁵ See Elliott-Binns, *The Early Evangelicals*, 453.

¹⁶ Stott. op. cit., 209, 210.

comprehensiveness of the theological knowledge acquired by the students, and with the judiciousness of the mode in which it had been imparted.' ¹⁷ It was one more visible focus of London Evangelicalism.

At the risk of over-simplification it could be said that while the Clapham Sect had raised the profile of Evangelicalism and gained it a new respect in the Church and in Society, it was the CMS which proved to be the main instrument in perpetuating that influence and extending it at a popular level throughout the 19th century. Further, the establishment of Annual Meetings and Annual Sermons in London, usually preached by gifted preachers to elicit increasing support and giving, gave fresh inspiration and impetus to Evangelical clergy and laity alike. Three of the first five Annual Sermons were preached by London clergy, namely, Scott, Cecil and John Venn. ¹⁸ Nor should the vital work of 'local auxiliaries' be forgotten. We know that, later, in 1828 Daniel Wilson established in London the Islington Church Missionary Association which has 'ever since been one of the most active and fruitful of all the Associations, and has long raised £3000 a year for the Society.' ¹⁹

¹⁷ Cited by Stock, op. cit., 266.

¹⁸ See Stock, op. cit., i, 76.

¹⁹ Stock, op. cit., i (1899), 256.

The increasing prominence and influence of the London layman Dandeson Coates (d.1846), not always to the liking of some clerical critics, should not pass unnoticed. He was appointed committee member (1817), assistant secretary 1824, lay secretary (1830).

Thus we see Evangelical missionary societies providing another cohesive force, furnishing opportunities for deputations for preaching tours, 'so keeping small, isolated pockets of Evangelicals in the provinces in touch with each other.'²⁰ There were other significant growth points for Evangelicalism beside London in 1820.²¹

We have already noticed Pratt's significant work as the secretary of the Eclectic Society from 1797-1814. However, his greatest contribution to Evangelicalism was through CMS when he followed Thomas Scott as secretary in December 1802. His secretaryship continued until April 1824, and he would often spend 12 hours a day on CMS work at Salisbury Square. Even after that he retained an active interest.²² It was as a strategist, motivator, and energetic worker, that his contribution to

²⁰ E Jay, *The Religion of the Heart* (Oxford, 1979), 31.

²¹ See Jay, *op. cit.*, 36.

²² See Pollard, *op. cit.*, 901.

London Evangelicalism through the Eclectic Society and CMS and, as we shall see, the *Christian Observer*, was so important.

Evangelicals and Dissent: Two Interdenominational Societies

We move to a consideration of two inter-denominational evangelical societies of particular significance for Anglican Evangelicalism in London. Their origins and development were profoundly influenced by London Evangelicals, lay and clerical, and their growth also positively impacted on London Evangelicalism.

The Religious Tract Society

The Religious Tract Society was founded in 1799 'with a committee of an equal number of Anglicans and Nonconformists, for the publication and dissemination of tracts and other Christian evangelical literature.'¹ 'The ideals of this society appear to have been anticipated by the Society for Promoting Religious Knowledge Among the Poor (popularly known as

¹ 'Religious Tract Society' in ODCC, 1381.

the Book Society)² Some indication of the value John Newton already placed on disseminating literature for children and the labouring poor is seen in his joining the latter society in 1768. A further incentive for the formation of the RTS was the winding up of Hannah More's Cheap Repository tracts in 1798.

Balleine describes the aim of the new society as 'to produce plenty of clean and wholesome literature, and thus drive out of the market the vicious ballads and stories which hundreds of hawkers were selling from door to door and also to print short pithy statements of religious truth.'³ Tract 1 stated 'Everyone has not the talent of talking to others on subjects of religion. Some have a diffidence which they cannot overcome. But it is not so hard to take a tract and say, "My friend, read that, and tell me what you think of it." It is a cheap way of diffusing the knowledge of religion; it is not so likely to give offence as some other methods of doing good; and it forms an excellent accompaniment to other methods.'⁴

The RTS played an important part in the evangelical domestic mission of the early nineteenth century. It had a double role in the distribution of

² Hindmarsh, op. cit., 197.

³ Balleine, op. cit., 166.

⁴ *On Distributing Religious Tracts* (1799). See Balleine, op. cit., 166.

Christian literature being both for the edification of Christians and an evangelistic agency. Among those who agreed early to have their tracts printed and circulated by the RTS was Richard Cecil. Others were Charles Simeon, Thomas Biddulph, and Legh Richmond, who served as a secretary to the Society. The Claphamite Zachary Macaulay was a member of the first committee.⁵ By the 1850s the society 'had distributed 1,354,616 copies of the three major stories making up the volume of *Annals of the Poor*'.⁶

The British and Foreign Bible Society

The British and Foreign Bible Society (henceforth referred to as 'The Bible Society' or BFBS) was founded in London in 1804. The Bible Society's founding is usually considered to have been 'on the initiative of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Thomas Charles' (1755-1814).⁷ Charles was a member of the SPCK and of the RTS and 'saw an opportunity to provide a regular supply of Bibles for people in their own tongue, and (with others) exerted his influence to establish the BFBS in 1804'.⁸ Unfortunately the new Society soon became widely viewed as the chief

⁵ See Hylson-Smith, op. cit., 99.

⁶ Newell, 'Richmond, Legh' in DEB, ii, 936, 937.

⁷ See, e.g. Ditchfield, op. cit., 94.

⁸ GM Roberts, 'Charles, Thomas' in DEB, i, 215.

rival of the SPCK, which was considered to symbolize the values of the Anglican Establishment.⁹ This antipathy of the SPCK to the Bible Society was due largely to its aversion towards Dissenters, even its own dissenting subscribers.¹⁰

The Bible Society was formed at a public meeting in Bishopsgate Street on 7th March 1804, as a strictly interdenominational body. 'By its constitution its committee it was composed of 36 laymen (including 6 representatives of foreign churches in London), the English members consisting of 15 Anglicans and 15 members of other denominations.'¹¹ Granville Sharp presided and a significant speech was made by the Rev. John Owen, curate and lecturer at Fulham and chaplain to Bishop Porteus.¹² Owen regretted the tendency of different denominations of Christians to regard each other "with a sort of pious estrangement, or rather consecrated hostility." His tolerant attitude did much to make possible the cooperation between Anglicans and Dissenters in the society's constitution.'¹³

⁹ See L Howsam, *Cheap Bibles: Nineteenth Century Publishing and the B&FBS* (Cambridge, 1991), 4,5.

¹⁰ See W Canton, *A History of the British and Foreign Bible Society* (1904), i, 13.

¹¹ See Canton, op. cit., 11.

¹² See Canton, op. cit., 11.

¹³ Howsam, 'Owen, Jones' in DEB, ii, 848.

The first secretary, for a very brief period, was Josiah Pratt who was succeeded by John Owen. It was Pratt's proposal that representation on the committee should be as already indicated. The members of the first committee are named by Canton¹⁴ and among them are Charles Grant, Granville Sharpe, William Wilberforce, James Stephen and Zachary Macaulay. These had all been supporters of the RTS. Close links with the Eclectic Society and Clapham Sect are also evident. Lord Teignmouth was elected President, William Wilberforce as Vice-President, and Henry Thornton as treasurer.¹⁵

Howsam has drawn attention to the history of the Society as a publisher. This venture was inspired and informed by the revival of "serious" or "vital religion" which would invade and transform British churches and homes, and ultimately the national public morality¹⁶. A key factor in its success, early and later, was its popular evangelicalism involving poorer people, as well as the middling and rich, not merely as consumers but as distributors of books.¹⁷

¹⁴ op. cit., 16.

¹⁵ See Hole, op cit., 386, 387.

¹⁶ See Howsam, op. cit., xiii.

¹⁷ See Howsam, op. cit, xiii.

¹⁷ See Howsam, op. cit., xiv.

Whereas the RTS was founded for the production and circulation of popular religious literature acceptable to evangelical Christians, the Bible Society was concerned solely with the printing and selling of the Scriptures. Local Auxiliaries soon began to be formed but these were all initiated at the local level. The principle of decentralisation was strongly emphasised. Canton remarks: 'The first indication of the new movement was the establishment in London, in July 1805, of "an association for the purpose of contributing to the fund of the British and Foreign Bible Society"' ¹⁸ having in mind those who could not afford the annual membership subscription. The newly emerging groups became a considerable force in the larger society. It is important to be aware of the palpable tension between evangelical Dissent and Evangelicals at this period. The French Revolution had been a cause of antagonism towards Dissenters, because of suspicions of Jacobin sympathies among Dissenters. Furthermore, the campaign for repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts between 1787 and 1790 was seen as a destabilising factor. Indeed, as late as 1793 Newton believed 'all the Dissenters, even the orthodox not excepted, are republicans and enemies of the

¹⁸ Canton, *op. cit.*, 47, 48

Government' ¹⁹ Even Charles Simeon hesitated before supporting the Bible Society. It was largely through Newton's deepening friendships with dissenting ministers, especially Samuel Palmer, in Hackney, William Jay and William Bull, that his own suspicions were removed. Some Dissenters were invited to attend Eclectic Society meetings. However, it was only by co-operating in enterprises that avoided denominational issues that they could successfully work together. Even so 'the Tract and Bible Societies functioned under the continual fear that their simple alliance might break up over issues of polity and church government..' ²⁰ Thus, Bebbington views the 'joint endeavour' illustrated in the founding of the Bible Society as 'an enduring monument to the possibilities of co-operation' adding, 'Such bodies exemplified an abandonment of exclusive denominationalism, a certain practical empiricism.' ²¹ For London Evangelicalism it was this aspect of cooperation with Dissenters which was of greatest significance.

In London both the interdenominational character of the Bible Society Committee and the social aims of committee members and supporters

¹⁹ Hylson-Smith, op. cit., 97, citing RH Martin, 'The Pan-Evangelical Impulse in Britain, 1790-1830', D Phil thesis (Oxford, 1974).

²⁰ RH Martin, op. cit., 368, cited by DM Lewis, op. cit., *Lighten Their Darkness*, Ibid., 14.

²¹ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, 66.

arose from, and were encouraged by, a loose network of social connections. However, these connections were not always within evangelicalism. Howsam points out that from the start not everybody associated with the Bible Society was committed to the kind of Evangelicalism normally associated with the Clapham Sect. There were other reasons to accept an office, both for the national body and local Auxiliaries. Particularly in the early years, aristocratic patronage was a mark of respectability and quite openly sought. Furthermore, 'the drinking squire, the swearing lord, and the man who has taken the chair in the hope of increasing his votes at the next election' were glad to obtain membership.²² Royal Dukes, Cabinet ministers, and several Bishops supported it. At the twelfth anniversary, in 1816, besides the Evangelicals Lords Gambier, Teignmouth, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Nicholas Vansittart), the speakers included the Duke of Kent (Queen Victoria's father), and four Bishops; while the Prime Minister, Lord Liverpool, spoke at several provincial meetings.²³ The London Committee recruited people experienced in many kinds of commercial business, in addition to politicians, lawyers and diplomats.

²² See Howsam, *op. cit.*, 31, who cites a paper by JP Hewlett (5th February, 1867).

²³ See Stock, *The English Church in the 19th Century*, 22.

The comment of Beilby Porteus, having the membership of the BFBS committee (1807) before him, is noteworthy: 'If anyone can be apprehensive of the slightest danger to the Church of England from a society of these persons ...he must be an Alarmist of a higher order than any I have ever yet met with.'²⁴ It was, indeed, Bishop Porteus who 'suggested the name of Lord Teignmouth, as a Noblemen singularly qualified for the office [of President] after interview with Rev. John Owen.'²⁵ J Owen was an Evangelical with considerable administrative ability.

Even if it cannot be measured with precision, there can be no doubt that the varied and diverse Evangelical influence in the Bible Society in London was significant. Whilst it is true that few London clergy were willing to countenance co-operation with Dissent early in the nineteenth century – indeed, relations did not reach their nadir until the 1830s ²⁶ – the founding of BFBS did provide evangelicals of all denominations with 'the institutional unity they had previously lacked' ²⁷ Nevertheless, later, Bishop Blomfield was still strongly disapproving of such co-operation and this led to the resignation of JA Garwood (c.1805-1889, Perpetual

²⁴ LPL, Beilby Porteus, MS 2102, 1807.

²⁵ G Browne, *The History of the B&F Bible Society* (1859), i, 15.

²⁶ See Lewis, op. cit., 27, 53.

²⁷ Stott, op. cit., 289.

Curate of St Mary, Spital Square) as clerical secretary of London City Mission in 1836.

The rivalry with SPCK was regrettable but, as far as London was concerned, the BFBS directorate may be viewed as an institution where the newer wealth of middle-class London 'was empowered to practise and exhibit its piety and respectability.'²⁸

The Continuing Predestinarian Debate

The Predestinarianism of John Newton and the Eclectic Society

John Newton was not as great a theologian as William Romaine although it is arguable that he was more influential. Neither was he in any sense a speculative theologian. Hindmarsh speaks of 'a curve of increasing moderation of Newton's theology'¹ Gradually Newton's high esteem for sophisticated theologians like Jonathan Edwards and John Owen

²⁸ Howsam, op. cit., 2 & 27.

¹ See Hindmarsh, op. cit., 166.

lessened.² By 1778 he began to wonder if Owen did not give in to a “needless display of erudition”³ By 1794 he regretted having recommended books such as the *Inquiry into Freedom of Will*: “I do not now recommend it”. His moderate Calvinism is evident in his published letter of 1775: ‘... I am a sort of middle man, and consequently no great stress is laid upon me where the strengthening of a party, or the fighting for a sentiment, is the point in view. I am an avowed Calvinist: the points which are usually comprised in that term, seem to me so consonant to scripture, reason, (when enlightened,) and experience, that I have not a shadow of doubt about them.’ In fact, he came to dread high Calvinism and felt more spiritual unity with some Arminians, than with some Calvinists. Thus, ‘if I thought a person feared sin, loved the word of God, and was seeking after Jesus, I would not walk the length of my study to proselyte him to the Calvinistic doctrines ... because I believe these doctrines will do no one any good till he is taught them by God. ... For this reason, I suppose, though I never preach a sermon in which the tincture of Calvinism may not easily be discerned by a judicious hearer, yet I very seldom insist expressly upon those points, unless they fairly

² Hindmarsh, op. cit., 166, 167.

³ Hindmarsh, op. cit., 250, 167 citing *Letters* (Coffin), 91.

and necessarily lie in my way.’⁴ Further, in his *Vigil*, in 1785: ‘When you are led (as I think you will be, if you are not already) to view the Calvinist doctrines in a favourable light, be not afraid of embracing them because there may be perhaps some objections which, for want of a full possession of the key [the master-key frequently styled *the analogy of faith*] I mentioned, you are not able to clear up; but consider if they are not as strong or stronger against the other side.’ Further, given the total depravity of human nature, we can only account for the conversion of a soul to God, if we admit an election of grace. The work has to begin either with the sinner first seeking the Lord, or the Lord first seeking the sinner.⁵ He concludes his sermon ‘The Sovereignty of Divine Grace Asserted and Illustrated’: ‘Does it not appear from hence, that the doctrine of free sovereign grace is rather an encouragement to awakened and broken-hearted sinners than otherwise?’⁶ His determinate position and eirenic approach are evident in his Preface to *Olney Hymns*: ‘I have not a wish to obtrude my own tenets upon others, in a way of controversy: yet I do not think myself bound to conceal them ... The views I have received of the doctrines of grace are essential to my peace, I could not

⁴ Newton, *Works*, vi, 278, 279.

⁵ See *Works of Rev John Newton*, i (1824), 190.

⁶ *Ibid.*, ii, 404-414.

live comfortably a day or an hour without them ... I know them to be friendly to holiness, and to have a direct influence in producing and maintaining a gospel conversation, and therefore I must not be ashamed of them.’⁷

Thomas Scott was also a moderate Calvinist. In an account of his own preaching he stresses ‘I dig deep to lay the foundation for the Gospel of free grace...and [God’s] ability and willingness to save to the uttermost all that come. Thence I show that all who will *may* come, *ought* to come, and that all sin atrociously in *not* coming: that, however, it is in no natural man’s heart to come ... But a God of sovereign grace, having mercy on whom He will, according to His own purpose, makes some willing, by regeneration.’⁸

It is probably fair to say that the moderate Calvinism of Newton and Scott was representative of London Evangelicalism throughout most of the 1780s and thus, generally, of the Eclectic Society. Hennell draws attention to a meeting of the Society on 14th April, 1800 ‘when Basil Woodd proposed the question “Is redemption general or particular?” and

⁷ Newton, ‘Preface’ to *Olney Hymns in Three Books* (Feb.15, 1779), ix, x.

⁸ Downer, *Thomas Scott* (1909), 30, 31.

answered it: "Redemption is both general and particular; but in different senses. It is not general, so as to be available to all. But it is so far general, that the ransom-price is sufficient to save the whole world." Hennell informs us 'Foster, Pratt and Scott all acquiesced in this.'⁹ No doubt, too, the influence of Charles Simeon, as a visiting member, was significant in the Society's deliberations: 'Be Bible Christians, and not system Christians'.¹⁰ His controlling principle for interpreting seemingly contradictory passages of Scripture is found in his Preface to *Horae Homeliticae*: The Author 'feels it impossible to repeat too often, or avow too distinctly, that it is an invariable rule with him to give every portion of the Word of God its full and proper force, without considering one moment what scheme it favours, or what system it is likely to advance.'¹¹ Thus, he abhorred what he called 'the golden mean' as a solution in matters of controversy. Rather, he insisted 'The truth is not in the middle, and not in one extreme; but in both extremes.'

Richard Cecil's (1748-1810) approach in interpreting Scripture is very similar to Simeon's and was the key to his position regarding the Predestinarian debate. 'The right way of interpreting Scripture is, to take

⁹ Hennell, *John Venn and the Clapham Sect* (1958), 264.

¹⁰ AW Brown, *Recollections of the Conversation Parties of the Rev. Charles Simeon* (1863), 269.

¹¹ W Carus, *Memoirs of the Life of the Rev. Charles Simeon* (1847), 6.

it as we find it, without any attempt to force it into any particular system. Whatever may be fairly inferred from Scripture, we need not fear to insist on. Many passages speak the language of what is called Calvinism, and that in almost the strongest terms: I would not have a man clip and curtail these passages, to bring them down to some system; let him go with them in their free and full sense, for, otherwise, if he do not absolutely pervert them, he will attenuate their energy. But let him look at as many more, which speak the language of Arminianism, and let him go all the way with these also.' ¹² It was Cecil who, in his 'Memoir of the Author', recalled Newton's comment: 'I hope I am upon the whole a SCRIPTURAL preacher; for I find I am considered as an Arminian among the High Calvinists, and as a Calvinist among the strenuous Arminians.' ¹³

Josiah Pratt (1768-1844) seems also to have adopted a mediating position on this particular issue. Thus, 'We may be content to preach in such a manner as to be accounted at one time Arminian and at another Calvinistic.' Again, 'The class of BIBLE CHRISTIANS INCREASES. Some of them seem to verge toward Calvinism. Others toward

¹² Pratt, *Remains of the Rev. Richard Cecil, M.A.* (1811), 211, 212..

¹³ *The Works of John Newton* (1824), i, 93.

Arminianism in some of its points. But all real Christians on both sides, decidedly incline, in experience and in preaching, to honour Divine grace, and to lower man.’¹⁴

Predestinarianism and The Clapham Group

Although John Newton was an unashamed Calvinist, he enjoyed close relationships with many in this group, and his counsel was often sought, as also was that of Charles Simeon. However, a decisive change of attitude came about on the issue of predestination. John Venn had started his ministry as a high Calvinist but moved gradually to a more liberal view on this point. Certainly he did not deny the doctrine of election but for him it was never of primary importance.

Hennell notes an entry in John Thornton’s diary: ‘an interesting conversation [almost certainly with John Venn] in which I found myself very nearly agreed with him. He differs from many of the Calvinists nearly as much as myself; takes an encouraging view of religion and has mild principles towards those who differ from him.’¹⁵

¹⁴ See Pratt, op. cit., 506.

¹⁵ Hennell, op. cit. (1958), 264. Clifford Hill remarks that Henry Thornton’s beliefs were in line with ‘a mild Calvinism without a strict adherence to predestination.’ Hill. *The Wilberforce Connection* (Oxford, 2004), 189.

William Wilberforce was a serious student of the Bible who sought to live out the 'faith' expounded in his *Practical View*. He has been estimated thus: 'Wilberforce was Evangelical in the best and highest sense. He was no Calvinist, but proclaimed Universal Redemption.'¹⁶ We know that he avoided services when Robert Hawker (a hyper-Calvinist, vicar of Plymouth) was preaching at the Lock Chapel, 'anxious as he was to shield his children from Hawker's "poison".'¹⁷ We should note, however, that Wilberforce did not hesitate to commend the writings of the Puritans as 'a mine of wealth, in which anyone who will submit to it with some degree of labour will find himself well rewarded for his pains.' He especially recommended John Owen on *Heavenly Mindedness* and on *Mortification of Sin*.¹⁸ Insofar as the term 'Calvinism' can be applied to the Clapham Sect at all, it would be simply that 'As good Calvinists they held a theocratic view of the State, not in the sense that the Church should control the State, but that the State should be, or should be made, aware of its responsibilities as an instrument in the hands of God.'¹⁹

¹⁶ GWE Russell, 'Wilberforce, William' in DECH, 656.

¹⁷ See Lewis, *Lighten their Darkness*, 30.

¹⁸ Wilberforce, *Practical View* (1797), 381.

¹⁹ Neill, op. cit., 239.

The titles of More's later works *Practical Piety* (1811), *Christian Morals* (1813), and *Moral Sketches* (1819) amount to a declaration of war on 'Calvinist Antinomianism, the belief that because Christians are saved by God's unmerited grace rather than by good works, the moral code was an Old Testament relic not applicable to God's elect.'²⁰ To More this was a dangerous presumption. She had heard that High Calvinists were strongly hostile to her stress on morality.

It is clear that these Evangelicals came to hold a more moderate form of Calvinism. Whilst most held firmly to the doctrine of predestination, they did not feel obliged to give it priority in their preaching. If they stressed divine sovereignty, they also stressed human responsibility and free agency. However, it should be noted that the older predestinarianism, whether of the more hardline sort of Whitefield and Romaine or the less doctrinaire sort of Newton, did not become defunct. William Howells (1778-1832), curate of William Goode at St Anne, Blackfriars (1812) and minister of Long Acre Chapel (1817 f.), allied himself with Robert Haldane from 1820 and became 'the leader of London Calvinists'.²¹

²⁰ Stott, op. cit., 286.

²¹ Hennell, 'The Churchman – Context of Victorian Evangelicalism' in *Churchman*, Vol.93, No.1, (1979), 27.

Nevertheless, the predestinarian issue in this period (1780-1814) does not appear to have impaired fellowship within this later Evangelicalism to anything like the same extent as that of the early Evangelicals and Wesleyan Methodists.

Private Patronage: John Thornton, Charles Simeon and the 1792 Clapham Appointment

It had become increasingly clear that Evangelical growth, especially in London, was being impeded by the low numbers of Evangelical incumbents. We have already referred to the Earl of Dartmouth's purchase of advowsons and his appointment of Evangelicals. However, it seems none of these had particular significance for London. Another Evangelical who purchased livings was John Thornton, who 'appears at the hub of the limited activity associated with evangelical preferment in the late eighteenth century.'¹ He was one of the few Evangelicals in a financial position to meet the prohibitive cost of advowsons. However, 'his programme involved no strategic planning; rather, he was a slightly naïve, good-natured philanthropist, "yielding to every honest impulse"'²

¹ Balda, 'To The Remotest Ages', PhD Thesis, Cambridge (1981), 55.

² Ibid., 58.

The distinctively new element in Thornton's approach to the problem of the non-preferment of Evangelicals was to purchase presentations to livings and set up a trust to administer these appointments. Built into the scheme was the provision that 'patronage would revert to the Thornton heirs after twelve successor-trustees had served in turn.'³ However, he showed no long-term perspective in regard to spheres of influence for Evangelicals and, perhaps more importantly, 'made no attempt to bind his heirs in the next generation to continue any of his own activities.' Indeed, 'Thornton showed no intention to provide either continuity or permanence through patronage.'⁴

In his lifetime, from extant records, Thornton is known to have appointed four Evangelicals in the London area out of his eight appointments in England. These were Roger Bentley (d. 1795) to St Giles, Camberwell, in 1769; Richard Conyers (1725-1786) to St Paul, Deptford, in 1775; and John Newton to St Mary, Woolnoth, in 1778/79. Also, Sir James Stonehouse⁵ was appointed to Clapham in 1774. All of these were 'next presentations', giving the patron the right of the next presentation only, in contrast to the purchase of advowsons which secured Evangelical

³ Ibid., 63.

⁴ Ibid., 98, 99.

⁵ See Hennell., op. cit., 18.

continuity. John Thornton had been responsible for the planning and building of the new church of Holy Trinity, Clapham, which was opened in 1776.⁶ He remained patron until his death. After Bentley's death, Camden Chapel, Peckham, was founded because his successor's preaching was not deemed to be sufficiently evangelical in character.⁷ Conyers, in spite of an idiosyncratic, nervous style, 'established domestic prayer meetings and scripture expositions, at which he excelled'⁸ By the time of John Thornton's death in 1790 there were three Thornton trustees, Roger Bentley (d.1795. Vicar of St Giles, Camberwell (1769-1790), Henry Foster, and John Venn.

Although residing in Cambridge, Simeon (b. 1759) was beginning to be a significant Evangelical influence in the Church of England. By 1792 his impact on London Evangelicalism became more direct. When John Thornton died in 1790, 'Simeon knew that Thornton had selected him as an eventual successor-trustee, but he recognised also that he could perform in no official capacity when Clapham became vacant in 1792.'⁹ Thornton, in his will, had made his wishes quite clear: 'I do desire that upon the death of the present incumbent of the Church at Clapham in the

⁶ See M Hennell, *op. cit.*, 111.

⁷ See Balda, 'Bentley, Roger' in DEB, i, 85.

⁸ Pollard, 'Conyers, Richard' in DEB, i, 247.

⁹ Balda, *op. cit.*, 78.

county of Surrey the Revd Henry Foster may succeed to the said living & my mind & will further is & I do desire that upon the death of the said Henry Foster the said John Venn may succeed him to the said church of Clapham.¹⁰ It appears that at first Foster was inclined to accept Clapham¹¹ However, although Simeon seems to have known the tenor of Thornton's will, 'he plainly ignored the testator's specific wish that Foster be appointed.'¹² It appears Simeon interfered and persuaded Foster that John Venn should be appointed with the outcome that Foster declined the offer.¹³ According to Balda, 'John Venn never knew that Simeon brought about Foster's change of mind.'¹⁴ No doubt Simeon would have argued that, consistent with his own ideas, Venn was the fittest man for this particular sphere of opportunity. But certainly there was some irregularity in the way Venn was appointed.

The period 1780-1813 witnessed significant consolidation and development of London Evangelicalism. The strong but sensitive leadership of Newton, especially through the Eclectic Society, the inspirational contribution of Wilberforce, particularly through the

¹⁰ Ibid., *ibid.*, 79, citing Venn MSS, CMS Archives, C 68, dated 1790.

¹¹ Ibid., citing Venn MSS, CMS Archives, C 21, 15 April 1792.

¹² Ibid., 80.

¹³ See *ibid.*

¹⁴ Ibid., 80, f.n. 26.

Clapham group, together with the intellectual and literary gifts of Hannah More, did much to consolidate Evangelicalism. These factors, together with the founding and early years of London-based Evangelical societies, did much to foster diverse networking among London Evangelicals.

Clearly, however, London Evangelicalism was still relatively weak numerically and in influence. That which was still embryonic and incipient needed to burgeon and mature. In spite of difficulties, sometimes divisions, the years 1814-1836 were to be a period of growth, acceptance and increasing influence.

5. THE PHASE OF EXPANSION AND ACCEPTANCE (1814-1836)

Simeon's Continuing Influence

Simeon's part in the appointment at Clapham in 1792 had revealed something of his forceful personality and his confidence in his personal judgment. It became increasingly clear to Simeon 'how very difficult it then was to place an evangelical man in any important post in the Church; and how any such had to be content with curacies or lectureships, or any small charge that they could obtain.' ¹ Having been involved in John Thornton's scheme, and joined the Thornton Trust in 1813 ², Simeon was well aware that Thornton's scheme did not meet the basic problem of continuity. He purchased his first advowson in 1814. The founding of The Simeon Trust was really the first attempt to address the issue of perpetuity in Evangelical appointments. The significant difference between the two schemes was that Simeon's sought to ensure permanent Evangelical succession. This, he believed, could be achieved only by establishing a trust permanently committed to his Charge of 18th March 1833 and whose trustees would be self-perpetuating. Thus the Charge was given 'to all my

¹ M Seeley, *The Later Evangelical Fathers* (1879), 274.

² See Balda, op. cit., 62.

Trustees and to all who should succeed them in the Trust to the remotest ages.' There was to be no reversion to any heirs of individual trustees.

Simeon summarised thus: 'And there is this difference between myself and others: they purchase income ... I purchase spheres [of influence], wherein the prosperity of the Established Church, and the kingdom of our blessed Lord, may be advanced; and not for a season only, but if it please God, in perpetuity also.'³ Furthermore, his scheme enshrined the principle of a 'mature and finely-tuned combination of churchmanship and pragmatic evangelicalism.'⁴ However, unlike elsewhere, the Simeon Trust did not make a great impact directly on London Evangelicalism until after his death.

Despite not being resident in London, we have already noticed a number of significant ways in which Simeon had considerable influence on London Evangelicalism. In 1807, whilst recovering his health, he spent most of March at his brother's house in London and thus was able to spend more than usual time with his London friends.⁵ He clearly had a particular concern for the training and quality of Evangelical ministers in London. Charles Smyth notes his support for The London Clerical

³ Carus, op. cit., 780.

⁴ Balda, op. cit., 69.

⁵ See SC Orchard, 'English Evangelical Eschatology 1790-1850, Ph.D thesis, Cambridge University (1969), 108.

Education Society in 1816. Simeon wrote to Thomas Thompson: 'I am therefore engaged in establishing a Society in London ... for the education of young men at the University. I hope this will be the means of procuring many labourers for the Lord's vineyard.'⁶

Later Prominent London Evangelicals

Josiah Pratt (1768-1844)

Pratt's appointment to St Stephen's, Coleman Street, indicated some of the difficulties London Evangelicals experienced in gaining incumbencies. Pratt had been Curate to Richard Cecil at St John's Bedford Row (1795-1804), sometime lecturer St Mary, Woolnoth, St Lawrence, Jewry, and Spitalfields, before his incumbent chaplaincy at Wheler Chapel, Spital Square (1810-1826). In 1823 a vacancy occurred at St Stephen's and several parishioners urged him to stand for election to the vacant benefice. In the ensuing election Pratt received ninety-seven votes and Mr Fayle, his opponent, ninety-five. Fayle's supporters contested the result and the case was brought to Chancery.⁷ The Lord Chancellor ruled that an open poll, rather than balloting, should have been

⁶ Smyth, *Simeon* (Cambridge, 1940), 245, f.n., 3, but see later comment under 'Daniel Wilson (Sr.)', 248ff.

⁷ J Pratt and JH Pratt, *Memoir of the Reverend Josiah Pratt* (1849), 263.

held. An open poll was then held in 1826 and once again the voters elected Pratt. The institution took place in autumn of 1826.⁸

William Dealtry (1775-1847)

On the death of John Venn in 1813 the living of Clapham was vacant. A letter from Zachary Macaulay to Simeon shows the strong desire for the appointment of William Dealtry (1775-1847). Macaulay writes: 'The Parish to a man are longing and praying for Dealtry ...He has gained their hearts in a way which is quite surprising.'⁹

Writing about the vacancy, Simeon said: 'I instantly wrote to my co-trustees to fix their eyes on God, to whom alone we should look in such a matter. My mind was at once made up to act for the glory of God, and for that alone; Instantly called on Mr---, secured his cooperation, and appointed Mr Dealtry ... I felt that I might, if I pleased, decline to act; but, if I acted, I had no option; I must do simply and solely what I believed would be most acceptable to God.'¹⁰ Notwithstanding his urging

⁸ J Pratt and JH Pratt, op. cit., 263.

⁹ Letter dated 7th July 1813, R H, Cambridge.

¹⁰ Carus, *Simeon*, 386 f.

of his fellow trustees 'to fix their eyes on God', he promptly states 'I ... appointed Mr Dealtry.' Dealtry already had links with members of the Clapham group and, apparently, had been recommended by his predecessor John Venn. He was duly instituted that year, 1813, and remained rector of Clapham until 1843.

Dealtry's academic record at Cambridge, and after, was very distinguished. However he was also very able in other respects, later becoming chancellor of Winchester (1830) and Archdeacon of Surrey (1845). The *Christian Observer* remarked: 'as a preacher he was distinguished for clear statements of scriptural truth, for great beauty of style, and for the eloquence of his exhortations ...' ¹¹ He supported CMS ¹² and 'strenuously supported' the BFBS ¹³ He was also involved in the founding of CPAS, during which process he considered the backing of the bishops to be of prime importance. Thus he seconded the Rev. Thomas Dale's amendment to expunge the existing Regulation sanctioning lay agency. This was defeated. His major publications were *The Principles of Fluxions* (1810) and *The Importance of the Established Church* (1832). The latter, with his ecclesiastical offices, indicate his commitment to the Church of England.

¹¹ CO, xlvii. 135. Cited by A Pollard, 'Dealtry, William' in DEB, i, 305.

¹² Pollard, loc. cit.

¹³ R Harrison, 'Dealtry, William' in DNB, i, 18.

Edward Bickersteth (1786-1850)

In 1824 Edward Bickersteth (1786-1850), who had been Assistant Secretary of CMS, succeeded Pratt as Secretary and continued until 1830. As a layman his early Christian witness and ministry had been in Norfolk. However, 'his ardent spirit caught the flame of missionary zeal' (c.1810) so he sought advice from Pratt who proposed he should seek ordination and assist him in London (1815). Bickersteth's response included the statement: 'the great object of the Church Missionary Society has long had my earnest prayers, and the warmest desires of my heart; and I am persuaded I could enter with my whole mind into its plans and labours.'¹⁴ On 9 August 1815 Pratt wrote: 'It is the unanimous wish of the Committee that you would render the Society this most seasonable and important service.'¹⁵

Bickersteth was not a graduate and so was required by Bishop Henry Bathurst of Norwich to satisfy him as to his calling and suitability. However, having already read widely in theology and being self-evidently

¹⁴ Birks, op. cit., i, 245.

¹⁵ Ibid., 253.

a man of high intelligence, ability and good character, he had no difficulty in meeting the bishop's requirements and was ordained deacon on 19 December 1815 ¹⁶ and priest a few days later (by Bishop Henry Ryder). After a brief period in Africa in 1816 he took up his London-based work visiting and organising CMS associations and as principal of the missionary college ...¹⁷ On the retirement of Pratt in 1824, he was CMS Secretary for six years.

Meanwhile, when not travelling, Bickersteth preached on Sunday afternoons to a small congregation at Wheler Chapel, Spitalfields, having been appointed lecturer there in 1816. He became its minister in 1829. He had been given reason to believe he would be appointed to take the evening service at St. Mark's Clerkenwell in 1827 only to be disappointed. We find him submissive to God's will on 30 December 1827. ¹⁸ He continued with the afternoon service at Wheler Chapel where both the congregation and remuneration were small in 1828 ¹⁹ but could write in October: 'God is, I trust, prospering somewhat my congregation, and giving me an increasing interest in it.' ²⁰

¹⁶ Birks, op. cit., 264.

¹⁷ See Birks, op. cit., 456.

¹⁸ Birks, op. cit., 418.

¹⁹ Ibid., 421.

²⁰ Ibid., 426.

However, by April 1829 'The prospect of having Wheler Chapel for life' is becoming 'more hopeful' ²¹ and by the winter of 1829 the situation had been transformed: 'The winter was a deeply interesting time at Wheler Chapel; it was as if the Lord, who had tried his servant by so many years of waiting and humiliation, would now recompense him with a double blessing. The congregations were large and attentive; sinners were converted, and the children of God built up in the faith. Numbers crowded to the table of the Lord, so that on one occasion there were 150 Communicants ... Their affection to their pastor responded to the love he bore them.' ²² Further, on 6 December, he writes: 'There are now four regular services there [at Wheler Chapel] in the week.' And by 22 December the District Visiting Society had been established at Spitalfields and special prayer was being urged for the state of the Metropolis ²³ However, shortly afterwards, he left London for Watton where he published his widely used *Church Psalmody* in 1833, selling 150,000 within a few months. ²⁴

In spite of a very heavy workload, in the period 1816-44 he engaged in writing. His works, which were mainly of a devotional character,

²¹ Ibid., 430.

²² Ibid., 441.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ See I Bradley, *Abide with Me*, 17.

included *A Scripture Help* (1816), *Treatise on the Lord's Supper* (1822), and *The Christian Student* (1826). These were widely read and 'sold in the hundreds of thousands'²⁵ Bickersteth was not an original thinker but he was a voracious reader in theology, with an incisive mind, and a lucid and felicitous pen. It was as lecturer at Wheler Chapel that he wrote on the Lord's Supper: 'It appears very desirable that it should be administered and received once a month, and on the great festivals of the church'.²⁶ He also urged proper preparation for the Lord's Supper.²⁷ A ninth edition, considerably expanded, appeared in 1835. His publisher, Seeleys, claimed 'there are very few modern writers in Theology whose works have been so extensively read as those of Mr Bickersteth.'²⁸ His London inner-city experience led to his being open to using lay agents in evangelism and aware of the limitations of the Anglican parochial system.²⁹

We shall notice later Bickersteth's change of view to a pre-millennialist position. Here we simply note SC Orchard's remark that he 'was anxious

²⁵ Irvine, 'Bickersteth, Edward' in DEB, i, 92.

²⁶ Op. cit., 68.

²⁷ See Irvine, op. cit., 92.

²⁸ Hennell, *Sons of the Prophets* (1979) 38, citing a leaflet Seeleys circulated in 1852.

²⁹ See Irvine in DEB, i, 93.

to secure an outlet for pre-millennialism in London, and tried unsuccessfully to persuade London clergy to open their pulpits for a series of lectures on prophecy. Not until 1840 did he succeed.³⁰ This gives some indication both of his own growing interest in prophecy and of the strong resistance of most London clergy to his views at this stage.

Bickersteth remained influential well after he left London and, largely because of the reputation and respect he had gained, continued to be significant for London Evangelicalism. We should note his attitude to the question of disestablishment and his deep concern about the consequences of such a possibility: 'The rejection of God's true Church by the Nation would be a national crime to be visited by awful national judgments.'³¹ He saw Socialism as a manifestation of the 'Spirit of Infidelity' and thus leading to a rapid deterioration of the world situation. This, of course, tended to confirm his later embracing of premillennialism.³² This latter topic was one which *The Record* was inclined to ignore. The *Christian Observer*, however, showed some interest but never moved from its

³⁰ Op. cit., 156.

³¹ Letter from Edward Bickersteth to Mr Baker (February 13, 1837), cited by DM Lewis, op. cit., 22.

³² See Lewis, op. cit., 73.

postmillennial position.³³ With regard to the founding of the Church Pastoral-Aid Society, Bickersteth, with other leading Evangelicals, urged the new society to yield on the issue of lay agency and to conform to church discipline and order. He was, however, a supporter of the interdenominational London City Mission (founded 1835), a society which gave financial support for lay evangelists who would normally be attached to particular local churches.

In Edward Bickersteth we have a further example of a non-graduate Evangelical clergyman, like Newton and Scott before him, gaining the respect and esteem of his fellow Evangelicals. In addition to his administrative ability and pastoral sensitivity, he was also a gifted preacher, being invited in 1849, with Archbishop JB Sumner, to preach at the CMS fiftieth anniversary.

Although Bickersteth's main work was as principal secretary of CMS (1824-1830), he also came to be regarded as one of the Evangelical leaders and 'a major architect' of their later success.³⁴ Eugene Stock remarks: 'His evangelical fervour was irresistible' ³⁵ Thus, in addition to

³³ See Lewis, *op. cit.*, 101.

³⁴ See Irvine, *op. cit.*, 93.

³⁵ Stock, *History of CMS*, i, 253.

his Wheler Chapel ministry, his personality, spirituality and writing, had a profound influence in London as well as nationally.

The Rev. Daniel Wilson (Sr) and The Islington Clerical Meeting

Some London chapels had very prominent Evangelical ministers. One such chaplain was Daniel Wilson (1778-1858), who was minister of St John's Chapel, Bedford Row, from 1808 to 1824, and who subsequently became the incumbent of St Mary, Islington and then Bishop of Calcutta. After leaving Bedford Row Wilson retained his proprietorship and nominated the two ministers who succeeded him in 1824 and 1849.¹ It was whilst at St John's that he had founded in 1813 the London Clerical Education Society which provided funds to enable Evangelical candidates for the ministry to receive university education.² In Wilson's time St John's became 'a kind of headquarters for the evangelical Anglican party in London.'³

¹ See Pomfret, op. cit., 33.

² See Hylson-Smith, 47. Smyth (*Simeon*, 244) attributes this to Simeon in 1816. Possibly it was in this year that Simeon contributed significantly to the already existing Society.

³ D Forrester, 'Wilson, Daniel' in DEB, ii, 1205.

There is little doubt that early on John Newton had a profound influence on Wilson. His biographer, Josiah Bateman, refers to an interview with Newton on 29 April 1796. In writing to a certain Mr. Eyre, and a few days later to his mother, Wilson describes at some length the impact of this meeting. Thus, 'The words of Mr. Newton, that unbelief is a great sin and should be prayed against as such, continually recur to my mind.'⁴ In November 1796 again he writes: 'I asked Mr. Newton his opinion concerning reading other books than the Bible'. Newton's response was: 'I would not have you read many books, though some may help you forward. The Bible is the spring from whence they are all derived; and you have as much right to draw from the fountain as any one else.'⁵ Wilson was undoubtedly a greater technical scholar than Newton – he won the chancellor's prize in 1803 and became vice-principal of St Edmund Hall in 1807 – but, like Newton in his parish letter of 1781, he displays true Evangelicalism and Anglicanism. In addition to Bateman's *Life*, we have two significant documents which demonstrate both his scholarship and Evangelicalism. In 1826 he wrote an 'Introductory Essay' to the 1829 edition of Wilberforce's *Practical View* [i-lxxvi] and on 1

⁴ J Bateman, *The Life of the Right Rev. Daniel Wilson, D.D.* (1860), i, 15.

⁵ Bateman, *op. cit.*, 18,19.

January 1829 he published 'A Letter to the Parishioners of St. Mary, Islington' ⁶

In his 'Introductory Essay' he writes of 'the scriptural doctrine of the deep fall and corruption of our nature' and of 'the fundamental and consolatory doctrine which perhaps, most characterized the Reformation, justification by faith only...' ⁷ Again, of 'The deep fall and impotency of man, the person and glory of Christ, the Deity and operation of the Holy Ghost, justification by faith only, regeneration and progressive sanctification by the Spirit, holy love, obedience the fruit and evidence of faith, - all centring in the cross, emanating from the atonement and righteousness, and conspiring to illustrate the power and grace, of our Lord Jesus Christ.' ⁸

In his *Letter* (1829) he again refers to the fall and corruption of our nature; and 'the stupendous redemption of man by the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ'. Among the principal articles of the Christian Faith which

⁶ Copy deposited in the CUL, Classmark:Pam.5.82.51.

⁷ Wilson, op. cit., xlv.

⁸ Ibid., lxii.

‘sum up our doctrine’ are repentance, faith, and obedience.⁹ Such is the Christian religion, ‘the centre-point of which is *Jesus Christ and him crucified.*’¹⁰ He expresses his conviction that it is the Church’s doctrines and plan of ecclesiastical discipline which are, ‘upon the whole, most conducive to the good order of society, and the purity and perpetuity of the gospel among us.’¹¹ Here, probably, we have the most explicit Evangelical expression of Anglicanism to this date. He believes the Church’s doctrines to be scriptural, its liturgy sublime, and its administration of the sacraments devout. Its simple occasional services, and ‘its apostolical plan and form of ecclesiastical government’ he regards as ‘the best practical expedient for advancing the salvation of souls.’¹² His desire for practical religion is evident. Hence, ‘We must practice what we know to be right, and that without delay, if we would attain salutary knowledge.’¹³ If Wilson’s crucicentrism is explicit, his biblicism, conversionism and activism are implicit throughout his twenty-one pages.

Daniel Wilson was a very effective parish incumbent. On becoming Vicar of Islington in 1824, he ‘at once set about building three [churches] in his

⁹ Ibid., 5.

¹⁰ Ibid., 6.

¹¹ Ibid., 21.

¹² Ibid., 21.

¹³ Ibid., 11.

great parish, to seat 2000 persons each.' ¹⁴ and introduced 8 am Holy Communion at Islington in 1824 – 'often thought a uniquely High Church practice.' ¹⁵

Wilson's views on predestinarianism had been formulated and expressed at an earlier stage. When the topic 'What are the Prominent Difficulties Attending the Arminian System?' was discussed at a meeting of the Eclectics on April 13, 1812 his views, with those of B Woodd, W Goode, and Josiah Pratt were noted. Wilson asserted: 'Practical Calvinism is far superior to Arminianism – in respect of the sinfulness of sin, as to the attraction of the Cross, in increasing the difference between godly and ungodly men, in respect to encouragement to turn to God.' ¹⁶

Wilson started the Islington Clerical Meeting, which later became The Islington Clerical Conference, in 1827. He invited twelve clerical friends to his study 'to discuss the subject of prayer with special reference to the

¹⁴ Stock, *The English Church in the Nineteenth Century* (1910), 19.

¹⁵ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 147.

¹⁶ Pratt, J H, *Notes*, 505-507.

Bible Society controversy and the danger of a European war.' ¹⁷ Thus we see a certain parallel with the formation by John Newton and others, of the Eclectic Society with its monthly meetings. Neither came about as the result of any formal policy decision, but by individual initiatives. The importance of the inauguration of the annual, as distinct from monthly, Islington Conference soon became apparent. These annual meetings became a major focal point for many Evangelical clergy approximating, in effect, to an Evangelical national party conference. ¹⁸

For most of this period the Islington Clerical Conference was presided over by the Vicar of St Mary, Islington; but the chairmanship was an elected office. We know that during this period the Revd. John Cunningham, vicar of Harrow, who had warm correspondence with Simeon ¹⁹, chaired some of these annual meetings ²⁰ Cunningham was a leading figure among Evangelicals and later became the editor of the monthly periodical the *Christian Observer* from 1850-1858. He was a life

¹⁷ Hylson-Smith, op. cit., 102.

¹⁸ See Lewis, op. cit., 5.

¹⁹ See Moule, *Simeon*, 189, 191.

²⁰ See Elliott-Binns, *Evangelical Movement* (1928), 89.

governor of both CMS (becoming the most frequent anniversary speaker) and BFBS.

After Bishop Wilson's departure for India, his son, Daniel Wilson [Jr] (1805-1886), became vicar of Islington, Rural Dean (1860) and Prebendary of St Paul's (1872). He became President of the Islington Clerical Association in 1832 and the Conference continued to grow in influence in London and in the wider Church, giving Evangelical clergy guidance and confidence in the face of loneliness and perplexity.²¹

The comment in the document 'The Principal Clergy of London',²² when Wilson [Jr] had been vicar twelve years, is particularly revealing as to the personalities and abilities of the Wilsons [Jr and Sr] : 'The Islington Clergy hang together through every difficulty, and, led by a very clever and able man, form an important party of themselves ... Most of them, particularly the first [Daniel Wilson (Sr)] and last [Daniel Wilson (Jr)], are most able and active clergymen.'

²¹ See Elliott-Binns, *op. cit.*, 89.

²² Sent to the editor of *The Times* (1844), BL, MS Add. C. 290.

Just as the earlier Eclectic Society had been founded, and largely dominated, by Evangelical clergy, so also the Islington Clerical Meeting (as its name suggests) was mainly for the benefit of the clergy. By contrast, the Clapham Group's membership, apart from Venn, was lay. They were not, of course, wholly isolated. Each provided a forum which served particular needs of the time. The fact that all these Evangelical gatherings were based in or near London was particularly significant for London; but there was no single Evangelical mechanism to provide over-arching Evangelical strategy or policy-making.

Frederick Sandoz and The Church Pastoral-Aid Society

'A society founded in 1836 to assist the home mission work of the Anglican Church by making grants of money for the stipends of curates and men and women lay workers. Its sympathies are markedly Evangelical.' ¹ That is the full extent of the entry article. The Society receives no mention at all in DECH under the title 'Evangelicals' by HM Larnier in DECH. Apart from mentioning that the Society was 'founded in 1836 to supply evangelical curates and lay workers in neglected parishes' and 'In 1841 nearly 1,700 clergymen were members of the society'.

¹ 'CPAS, the "Church Pastoral Aid Society"' in ODCC, 427.

Owen Chadwick offers only one further paragraph on the Society.² Even C Hole makes only a passing reference to it.³

Although the CPAS does not compare with the CMS in its significance for the Church of England, in the history of Evangelicalism in the 19th century it was of considerable importance. Its founding reveals much about the contemporary strength of Evangelicalism, its desire to work within the Established Church, as well as drawing attention to a certain lack of agreement on the key issue of evangelism.⁴ Furthermore, the part played by London Evangelicals, especially the laity, in the formation of the Society in the 1830s was deeply significant.

There has never been a full-scale history of the CPAS, so this thesis has been largely dependent on two earlier authors – E Stock and GR Balleine – and one later, the Ven. PB Coombs, for sight of a draft of his more recent thesis ‘The Formation of the Church Pastoral-Aid Society.’⁵ DM Lewis has also thrown further light on some of the problems and issues involved.⁶

² *The Victorian Church* (1971), Part One, 446, 449, 450.

³ See op. cit., 417.

⁴ See Lewis. op. cit., 44,45.

⁵ MA Thesis of the University of Bristol, 1961 (not paginated).

⁶ *Lighten Their Darkness*, 42-45.

In the early 1830s sSome Evangelicals were already expressing the need for an enterprise specifically to forward the evangelisation of England and calls were being made for the establishment of an Anglican home mission society.⁷ Some were increasingly uneasy about contributing to evangelism through 'dissenting societies' because many Dissenters were now campaigning for disestablishment. We know that meanwhile Robert Seeley, the Fleet Street publisher, 'with a circle of City friends had also been maturing plans, and had just failed to persuade the Bishop to start a Diocesan Society.'⁸ However, it was not until 20th November 1835 that a definite proposal was made for the founding of an Anglican society, coming from the group of Islington laymen responsible for an earlier letter of 12th March 1835.

This letter, signed by Frederick Sandoz, outlined 'a proposal for a "Church Home Missionary Society" whose general object would be "The aiding of ministers of the Church of England in their pastoral office." He gave a few details as to how the Society would operate and again

⁷ See *Record* (1833), Sept. 12 & 16, Dec.26, (1834), Jan. 27, cited by Lewis, op. cit., 295, f.n.95.

⁸ Balleine, op. cit 76.

appealed for suggestions from "like-minded persons"⁹. Sandoz and others wanted an ostensibly Anglican society, but one that would make use of laymen to officiate at services held in buildings owned by the CP-AS. If necessary, Sandoz suggested, 'the buildings could be registered as Dissenting chapels!'¹⁰ Frederick Sandoz is now recognised as the chief organizer of CPAS – 'a key lay figure in the evangelical Anglican network based in London.'¹¹

In his efforts to found the CPAS, Sandoz employed the threats of the radicals (who wanted to interfere with parishes with unfaithful ministers) in order to put pressure on Bishop Bloomfield to patronize the new society. He wrote to him as Bishop of London warning that the more extreme among the laymen were prepared to form an independent evangelistic society should the CP-AS fail.'¹² The following month Sandoz issued a nation-wide Appeal consisting of a six page pamphlet addressed to 'The Zealous and Attached Members of the Church of

⁹ Coombs, op. cit.

¹⁰ Lewis, op. cit., ibid. 43, citing Sandoz's letter to the *Record*, Dec. 3rd 1835.

¹¹ IS Rennie, 'Sandoz, Frederick' in DEB, ii, 972.

¹² Lewis, op. cit., 44.

England' to which was appended the Bishop of Chester's Visitation Charge of 1835. The significant points of the Charge were that the Church had failed in its duty to the nation by entrenching herself behind 'established usage and legal requirement' and that 'wherever there are spiritual wants and responsibilities there should be spiritual superintendence.'¹³

The compilers of the Appeal stressed that due regard should be given to the ordinances of the Established Church. Whereas the welfare of souls was the primary object of the Society, 'the Society will seek to cultivate a deep attachment to all her [the Church's] institutions and enlightened respect to all her authorities ... the utmost deference and respect will be paid to the Bishops and clergy in all its proceedings. A licence from the Bishops will in all possible cases be sought for its chapels or buildings.'¹⁴

This continuing initiative and influence of London lay people in the post Claphamite period is important. The lay leadership exemplified by the

¹³ See Coombs, op. cit.

¹⁴ *The Appeal*, 5, cited by Coombs.

Clapham Group was still fresh in the minds of many London Evangelicals. It is noteworthy that of the three Honorary Joint Secretaries appointed in February 1836, all London men, two were laymen: F Sandoz and Nadir Baxter (b. c.1800). After 1847 Baxter was a senior partner in a prominent firm of parliamentary solicitors. The Rev. John Harding (1805-1874), in addition to being a committee member of CMS, was minister at Park Chapel, Chelsea, in 1834 and rector of St Andrews-by-the-Wardrobe with St Anne, Blackfriars in 1836.

Almost by default a new power base, in the committee rooms of evangelical societies, was emerging. This was a group of lay leaders, most of whom were London lawyers, 'more back-room men than public figures, and more administrators than exciting leaders of vision'.¹⁵ However, without the continuing and active support of a growing number of clergy the CPAS project could never have succeeded. Other younger clergy of considerable ability were also coming to the fore and willing to give active support to the Society. Such were Thomas Dale (1797-1870), a scholarly man who had been curate at St Michael, Cornhill (1822-1825) and St Bride's, Fleet Street (1826-1828), returning as vicar in 1835, and

¹⁵ See Rennie, 'Baxter, Nadir' in DEB, i, 68,69.

Henry Melville (1798-1871), with 'a considerable reputation as a most eloquent preacher of the evangelical persuasion'.¹⁶

The function of the committee members in regard to the selection of the Society's lay agents was a potential difficulty. This was resolved when it was conceded that enquiry and decision as to suitability should be entrusted to clerical members of the Committee alone.¹⁷

A major issue was over the proposal to employ lay assistants. Both the *British Critic* and the *British Magazine* denounced such a plan. This issue was not settled easily but although the differences between CPAS supporters on this point were real and deep, they were united in their desire to maintain support for the Established Church. All wanted an Anglican home mission society but some were also 'willing to ignore ecclesiastical order, and if necessary, to take action independent of and unpopular with the Evangelical clergy.'¹⁸

On this question of the loyalty of Evangelicals to the Church of England., CK Francis Brown stated: 'their undoubted loyalty to the Church of England is sometimes hard to understand in view of their lack of a

¹⁶ P Penner, 'Melville, Henry' in DEB, ii, 764.

¹⁷ See Balleine, op. cit., 177,178.

¹⁸ Lewis, op.cit., 43.

theology of the Church and their spiritual affinity with the *ethos* of the London Missionary Society¹⁹ and Protestantism, yet loyal they were, chiefly, perhaps, because of the tradition of Simeon.”²⁰ This recognition of loyalty is welcome but not as surprising as Francis Brown suggests. We have already noted Newton’s *Apologia*²¹ and Daniel Wilson’s *Letter* (1826). Nevertheless, it is misleading to speak of ‘their lack of a theology of the Church’. Their ecclesiology was indeed different from that of many contemporary London Anglicans; but that does not mean they had none. Nor did it mean they could not enjoy a spiritual affinity with many Non-conformists. Evangelicals knew Archbishop Laud (1573-1645) had been happy to refer to ‘the true Protestant Religion established in the Church of England’ and the Coronation Oath.

If the key issues for the founding of CMS had been loyalty to the leadership of bishops and the Book of Common Prayer and the desire for a society not dominated by clergy but emphasising the role of the laity in the missionary enterprise,²² the major issues for CPAS were the establishing of a Church domestic mission employing

¹⁹ Founded 1795, originally an interdenominational Society.

²⁰ CK Francis Brown, *A History of the English Clergy 1800-1900* (1953), 169, 170.

²¹ *Works*, v.

²² See Murray, *op. cit.*, 7.

paid lay agents and the degree of control by the Society. In the event the Society, at the bishops' insistence, agreed that lay workers should be employed only by the clergy, not the Society itself.²³

During the 1820s the urgency and magnitude of the task of evangelism and the need of lay involvement became patent. The networking involved in the formation of CPAS was one further factor in the development of London Evangelicalism and another move away from Evangelical clericalism.

Societies, May Meetings and the 'Exeter Hall'

The police magistrate and reformer Patrick Colquhoun listed 67 institutions concerned with public morals and benevolence as existing in London in 1795. Of these only 19 were founded in the last half of the nineteenth century and only 5 in the last quarter, thus suggesting mushroom growth in the first half.¹ Most Evangelical societies held their annual meetings in London in May, hence the 'May meetings' had special significance for Evangelicals.

²³ See Lewis, *op. cit.*, 43,44.

¹ See Brown, *op. cit.*, 328 f.

The Spring Annual CMS Sermon occasions, in addition to the spiritual edification and missionary challenge they generated, also enabled Evangelicals to become more aware of the growing strength of Evangelicalism in other parts of the country. Certainly, a little later, 'The sense of missionary optimism was enhanced by reports of successes (and heroic failures reminiscent of martyrdom) from overseas.'²

We should note that by 1817 some Evangelicals were getting worried by the element of triumphalism which seemed to be becoming evident in the May festivities which had evolved from the founding of the Evangelical Societies. The *Christian Observer* said: 'Their rapid and overwhelming progress has swept along with its vast variety of names, interests, and connections ... And has consequently given to the cause of religion a degree of worldly respectability and magnificence previously unknown in modern times.'³

The general procedure at these gatherings was for members to meet together to hear a report of the Society's activities over the past year, vote

² Ditchfield, *op. cit.*, 94.

³ *Christian Observer* (1817), 214. Cited by Ervine, *op. cit.*, 230.

on future policy, contribute to a collection, and receive general uplift and encouragement from speeches by well-known Evangelical leaders. The speeches at Anniversary meetings were widely reported in the press.⁴ Bradley notes: 'By 1830 the week had become so crowded that the whole month of May was given over to anniversary meetings and other Evangelical activities'.

Whilst the May meetings certainly served to stimulate new, countrywide, interest and support for different societies, London Evangelicals probably derived the greater benefit. This was not only because of easier access for Londoners but also many of the early preachers were well-known London Evangelicals. Three of the first six CMS preachers invited were London clergy - Newton (who was prevented by ill-health), Scott, and Cecil. JW Cunningham of Harrow became the most frequent speaker (16 times), Wilberforce (8 times), Daniel Wilson (7 times), Bickersteth (6 times).⁵

It was the pressure of the May meetings which led a group of Evangelicals in 1824 to set up 'an association to provide a central hall where societies could hold their anniversaries and seven years later Exeter Hall in the Strand was opened for the purpose.' The building contained a

⁴ See Bradley, *The Call to Seriousness* (1976), 138, 139.

⁵ Stock, *op. cit.*, i, 76, 250, 262.

large hall seating 3,500, a smaller one seating 600, and 21 committee rooms. 'Exeter Hall rapidly became a centre for all Evangelical activities. Its halls were regularly filled to capacity for Society meetings and anniversaries',⁶ thus it quickly became the standard Evangelical meeting place or, indeed, 'the epicentre of the global movement.'⁷ Hence, 'Exeter Hall' 'came to be used allusively as a title for a certain type of Evangelicalism.'⁸ Balleine concluded they not only sent the London clergy to the villages, but they drew the country Evangelicals to London. The availability of Exeter Hall proved a great boon to Evangelicals and it became their 'temple' in the Strand.⁹

It would be a mistake to conclude that the phenomena so powerfully present in the 'May meetings' did not exist before 1831. The annual sermons and public meetings of the BFBS, later followed by those of CMS (with the addition of its 'Dismissal' meetings) and other societies, were already times of celebration, inspiration and edification, for the Evangelical constituency.¹⁰

⁶ Bradley, op. cit., 14 0.

⁷ Bebbington, *The Dominance of Evangelicalism* (Leicester, 2005), 68.

⁸ Lewis, op. cit., 87.

⁹ See Stott op. cit.

¹⁰ See Stock, *The History of the Church Missionary Society*, 153.

This 'Christian carnival' aspect of the May meetings became increasingly prominent: the gatherings became both business affairs and social occasions, and it was quite normal for wealthier Evangelical families to come to London for the month of May so that they might attend as many meetings as possible.¹¹ Hence, Evangelicals from all parts of England got to know one another and 'petty parochialism quickly disappeared.'¹² Thus developed a major social event.

The galvanising effect of the May meetings was two-fold. First, because at these meetings feelings and sympathies were powerfully aroused and imaginations largely worked upon.¹³ Lewis also contends that 'the keenest patrons of this "serious" London season were women'¹⁴ and 'High emotion was certainly a common ingredient.'¹⁵ Secondly, there was the potential political power which the meetings generated in the long term. Thus, in May, 'Evangelicalism went on parade as a highly organized and militant national movement'. There now existed a countrywide network of societies involving hundreds and thousands of people. 'After 1831 they

¹¹ See K Heasman, *Evangelicals in Action* (1962), 22.

¹² See Balleine, *op. cit.*, 185.

¹³ See Lewis, *op. cit.*, *ibid.* p.140, who cites FM Holmes, *Exeter Hall and its Associations* (1881), 161.

¹⁴ Lewis, *op. cit.*, 139.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 140.

had also a national headquarters and a major public platform.’¹⁶ However, again it would be wrong to think of some semi-official or overarching body making policy or instigating united action. However, there was now a new focal point for London Evangelicalism.

Evangelical Publications

The two major regular Evangelical publications of the period were the *Christian Observer* and the *Record*. The idea of a monthly periodical was conceived by Josiah Pratt and, indeed, it was he who edited the first six editions of the *Christian Observer* when launched in 1802 with the encouragement of John Venn. Zachary Macaulay was editor 1802-1816. Its objects were: ‘to correct the false sentiments of the religious world, and to explain the principles of the church; in addition to which religious communications, there were to be articles, Miscellaneous; Literary; Reviews; and Reviews of Reviews, and historical events of the month, with a particular reference to Providence.’¹

Not surprisingly the *Christian Observer* generally reflected the kind of Evangelical inclusiveness of the Clapham Sect with its milder Calvinism,

¹⁶ Ibid., 141.

¹ Hennell, op. cit., 191, citing JH Pratt, *Eclectic Notes*, 92.

optimistic attitude to the Establishment and social agenda. Theirs tended to be a more moderate Evangelicalism than hitherto.² However, tensions were increasing among Evangelicals over this 'new Evangelicalism' with its more tolerant attitude in general and of Catholic emancipation in particular. Alexander Haldane (1800-1882) later wrote; 'We have no hesitation in avowing the belief, that when the *Record* commenced its labours, a widespread spirit of worldly wisdom and sinful compromise had come over a considerable portion of the evangelical party in the Church.'³

The *Record* began its life in January 1828 as 'a weekly paper viewing the news about Church and State through moderate Evangelical eyes,'⁴ However, it was shortly taken over by a group of laymen which included Alexander Haldane who advocated an aggressive Calvinistic Evangelicalism, Tory in outlook, and strongly hostile to Roman Catholicism.⁵ A Scottish lawyer, he had settled in London in the early 1820s. He came as a considerable force with a determination to maintain the state church and England as a Protestant nation. It had become clear by the mid-thirties that the earlier tradition of the *Christian Observer* no

² See Hill, op. cit., 190.

³ Haldane, op. cit., 193.

⁴ Toon, *Evangelical Theology, 1833-1856*, 7.

⁵ See *ibid.*, 7.

longer had general evangelical support. Thus it was the *Record*, 'opposing any concession to liberalism,' which now represented the political stance of Evangelicalism generally.⁶ This harsher form of Evangelicalism now had its base in London and within a short time the *Record* had the largest circulation of any religious newspaper. Haldane certainly helped Evangelicals retain their faith and their Established Church but showed little interest in the humanitarian and social dimensions of the Gospel. It represented a significant move away from Clapham Evangelicalism.

Typical of the later bullish approach of the *Record* was the issue of 2nd December 1833, where we see the growing suspicion and fear of any tendency towards Catholicism as discerned in the Test and Corporation Acts of 1828. Referring to the Oxford Movement, Owen Chadwick states: 'the *Record* launched a sudden onslaught upon the tracts [The first three were published in September 1833], quoted extracts about apostolic succession or the eucharistic sacrifice, and declared that its surprise was extreme and its sorrow poignant to read such literature from the pen of a Protestant minister.'⁷ It should be said that the *Christian Observer* was also strongly opposed to the tracts. Significantly, Bishop Blomfield

⁶ See Lewis, op. cit., 17.

⁷ Chadwick, op.cit., 73, 74.

(London 1828-1856) gave no support to the Oxford Movement but was 'anxious to keep things quiet as far as possible'⁸

Millennarianism

Millenarianism is a term which generally refers to beliefs relating to the millennium, the thousand-year period of righteousness predicted in the book of Revelation.

On 23 April 1789 Newton preached a sermon entitled 'The Great Advent'. In it he affirmed his belief in the personal return of the Lord.¹ and the manner of his coming and its implications for believers² but does not touch on the millennium. However, in a sermon on Revelaton 11.15 he observed: 'Prophecies which are not yet fulfilled will necessarily be obscure.' He added: 'For myself, I think it becomes me to confess my ignorance, and my inability either to reconcile the conjectures of others, or to determine which is the more probable, or to propose better of my own.'³ Nevertheless, he was well aware that: 'Some persons suppose, that the present frame of nature shall be dissolved and changed, and expect a proper resurrection of the dead; after which, the lord will

⁸ DNB, i, 173.

¹ Newton, *Works*, v, 229 f.

² op. cit., 237f.

³ op. cit., 413.

personally reign with his people upon the earth ... Others seem to conceive of the millennium, nearly in the same manner as Jews formed their expectations of Messiah's kingdom. They think that temporal honours, dominion, prosperity, and wealth, will then be the portion of believers; the very portion they are now called upon to renounce and despise.' ⁴ Newton himself wished to make considerable allowance for the use of the metaphorical language of prophecy.

Further, Newton believed the language used by the prophets to describe Messiah's kingdom 'cannot be justly applied to any period of the church already past' but does warrant us 'to hope, that the prayers and desires of the church shall, in some future period, be signally answered in the following respects:'

1. That the Gospel shall visit the nations which are at present involved in darkness ...'
2. That this Gospel shall prevail, not in word only, but in power ...'
3. That the animosities and disputes which prevail among Christians shall cease.
4. That it will be a time of general peace.

⁴ op. cit., iv, 413, 414.

In other words, Newton looked forward to 'a time [that] shall yet arrive, when the love of God and man, of truth and righteousness, shall obtain through the earth.' This, he said, should be the object of our prayers: 'The Lord will do great things, but he will be inquired of by his people for the performance.'⁵ This non-specific approach, in regard to the duration and future timing of the Millennium seems to have been shared by London Evangelicals of that time.

At the meeting of the Eclectics on 7th June 1802 the topic discussed was 'What foundation is there in Scripture for the doctrine of the millennium; of what nature will the millennium be; and to what use may the doctrine be applied?' Among those present were J Venn, Scott, Simeon, Clayton, Foster and Cecil.⁶ Whilst no conclusions are recorded, nevertheless the title may indicate a growing interest in the topic.

Until this time most Evangelicals expected the millennium to be attained through the preaching of the gospel and 'Only after this period of prosperity for the church would Christ come again.'⁷ This understanding was known as post-millennialism. However, the alternative view that Christ would return before the Millennium, known as pre-millennialism, had frequently

⁵ *ibid.*, 415-424.

⁶ See JH Pratt's *Notes*, 256-258.

⁷ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, 81.

been held in the Church's history. Lewis holds that 'By the 1820s, millennarianism was a preponderant concern of many Anglican Evangelicals.'⁸

Edward Irving (1792-1834) was not an Anglican, but was a very influential Church of Scotland preacher who came to London in 1822 and became minister of a large church in Regent Square in 1824, attracting many fashionable visitors and sightseers. George Canning 'referred admiringly to a sermon of his in the House of Commons'.⁹ Having previously believed, in 1826, that the advent of Christ is imminent, but not literal, Irving came to conclude, through his translation of *The Coming of Messiah in Glory and Majesty*, that Christ would certainly return in person. It was the publication of this book, in 1827, which marked a decisive re-emergence of the pre-

⁸ Lewis, op. cit., 32.

⁹ Horton Davies, op. cit., iii, 154.

millennialist tradition. It needs to be recognised that belief in the return of Christ in person was an innovation in the Evangelical world of the 1820s.¹⁰ Thus the enlightenment ideas of progress, as seen in the gradualist 'Clapham view' that human life could be changed by political action, gave way to the expectation of a cataclysmic intervention in the second coming of Christ.¹¹ This latter view was in direct contrast with the views of earlier Evangelicals. Bebbington notes: 'Thomas Scott declared in 1802 that in the future there would be "no visible appearance of Christ"; and in 1830 Charles Simeon assured a correspondent that it was 'a matter with which he had not the slightest concern.'¹²

Grayson Carter has argued that this important development within English evangelicalism was stimulated by the great convulsions of the French revolutionary era, the Napoleonic wars, and the imminent acceptance of

¹⁰ See Bebbington, *op. cit.*, 82, 84.

¹¹ See Stott, *op. cit.*, 319.

¹² Bebbington, *op. cit.*, 83 citing JH Pratt (ed.), *op. cit.*, 256 and 'Simeon to Miss E Elliott, 19 February 1830'.

Catholic emancipation, thus: 'some evangelicals began to speculate that present tribulations might be a prologue to a new age previously unimagined'. This anxiety led to a new emphasis on premillennialism.¹³ Randall Balmer describes premillennialism as 'a theology of despair, at least insofar as it relates to the impetus for reforming society according to the norms of godliness.' The premillennialists generally abandoned hope of extensive social amelioration and hoped for divine intervention.¹⁴ Bebbington sees it as 'part of the Romantic inflow into Evangelicalism'¹⁵ and Sheridan Gilley has described the message of premillennialism as "catastrophic and pessimistic, seeing both the world and the churches as so lost that only Christ's Second Coming could redeem them."¹⁶

Clyde Ervine is correct in stating that 'premillennialism had been tainted by the Irvingites and evangelical extremists of the 1820s.'¹⁷ Hannah More, having once been a subscriber to Irving's church, by 1823 'had become

¹³ Carter, 'Irving, Edward' in DEB i, 595.

¹⁴ See Balmer, *Encyclopedia of Evangelicalism* (Louisville, 2002), 382.

¹⁵ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, 84.

¹⁶ Gilley 'Edward Irving: Prophet of the Millenium' in J Garnett, and C Matthew, (eds), *Essays for John Walsh*, (1993), 107.

¹⁷ Ervine, 'Bickersteth, Edward' in DEB, i, 93.

disillusioned with “the peerless Northern Star”, finding him destitute of “taste and correct writing ... the grace of classic parts or even intelligible simplicity”¹⁸ The matter was discussed at the *Islington Conference* of 1830 when some stability was provided by the moderate clergy. According to Ervine, these included Simeon, Bickersteth, Baptist Noel and JW Cunningham.¹⁹ In the 1830s Edward Bickersteth decided to write a book on the subject ‘designed “to quiet the minds of those Christians, who were in danger of forsaking plain and immediate duties for the path of thorny and doubtful speculation.” However, before completing the work, he had abandoned the traditional Evangelical expectation about the future of Christianity and concluded that the present age would end with the cataclysmic, personal return of Christ to earth to establish his reign. The millennial reign of Christ ‘would not well up from below to engulf human history; rather it would descend from above and consummate it’²⁰ On 19 March 1833 he wrote ‘...I am preparing for the press the Sermons on “Preparedness for the Day of Christ”’ and on 27 March 1834 ‘I have found

¹⁸ Stott, op. cit., 320.

¹⁹ Ervine, *Doctrine and Diplomacy*, 292.

²⁰ Birks, *Memoir of the Rev. Edward Bickersteth* (1853), ii, 48, 60.

the doctrine of the personal coming of Christ before the millennium quickening and profitable to my soul...I pray that I may see it with greater clearness and power, hold it more firmly, confess it more boldly, and live in its joyful hope...'²¹ It was this change of view which both signified and accelerated the break-up of the consensus within Evangelicalism over many issues.²² Indeed, it was around millenarianism that Evangelicals experienced a bitter and far-reaching internal conflict which changed the Evangelical ethos in the later 1820s.

Irving had also profoundly influenced Henry Drummond (1786-1860), MP, a wealthy banker, who organised the celebrated Albury Park conferences in his Surrey home between 1826-1830 for the study of prophecy, where the emphasis increasingly was on the personal return of Christ. His dramatic preaching attracted several of London's aristocrats and political and literary figures. He also 'condemned "the love of order, moderation, piety and prudence" that characterised many evangelicals.'²³ In 1830 these conferences moved to Irving's church at Regent Square,

²¹ Birks, op. cit., ii, 60.

²² Lewis, op. cit., 33.

²³ See I Randall, *What a Friend We have in Jesus* (2005), 169.

London, thus ensuring continuing lively debate among London evangelicals (Dissenting and Anglican) about this issue.

The Strength and Impact of London Evangelicalism in the Early Nineteenth Century.

Percy Dearmer asserted: 'The latter half of the eighteenth century saw the Church of England largely under the sway of the Evangelicals'.¹ However, writing in 1910, Charles Hole stated it was 'During the first quarter of the [nineteenth] century, the Evangelical party continued to increase rapidly in numbers and influence, and were "the dominant spiritual force in the Church"'.² This latter opinion appears to be shared by S Neill.³ Nevertheless, Gladstone, in his famous article 'The Evangelical Movement; its Parentage, Progress, and Issue'⁴ challenges this idea that before the close of the eighteenth century the Evangelical movement had become dominant in England, and it continued the almost undisputed centre of religious life till the rise of the Tractarian movement.

Gladstone maintained, first, 'That the Evangelical movement never became, properly speaking, dominant in England ...' and, second, 'That,

¹ P Dearmer, 'Nineteenth Century Anglicanism' in OC AS Peake and RG Parsons (eds.), (N.D.), iii, 171.

² C Hole, op. cit., 389.

³ Op. cit., 234.

⁴ WE Gladstone, in *The British Quarterly Review* (July 1, 1879).

without becoming dominant ... It did by infusion profoundly alter the general tone and tendency of the preaching of the clergy; not, however, at the close of the last [18th] or the beginning of the present [19th] century, but after the Tractarian movement had begun ...'⁵ Gladstone made specific reference to the metropolis. Thus, 'It may, I think, be stated, without fear of contradiction, that during the first third-part of this century [19th] not a single London parish, west of Temple Bar, was in the hands of the Evangelical party. Islington in the north had Mr. Daniel Wilson for its vicar; but it appears that he came to it as it were accidentally, through the private exercise of the right of patronage in his family.'⁶ However, Gladstone does note that there were other Evangelical centres of religious influence but 'these were all proprietary chapels.'⁷ HM Larner makes a similar assessment.⁸ Pomfret claims: 'Fifteen proprietary chapels [out of 36] in the Diocese of London had reputations as centres of evangelicalism in and around 1830'.⁹ Nevertheless, we should take seriously Daniel Wilson's [Jr] comment in 1877: 'When I came to Islington in 1832 the Evangelical body was represented in London by few men in number and holding for the most part subordinate positions.'¹⁰

⁵ Ibid., 6.

⁶ Ibid., 9.

⁷ Op. cit., 9.

⁸ Larner, 'Evangelicals' in DECH, 216.

⁹ Pomfret, op. cit., 98.

¹⁰ *Record*, 19 January 1877, cited by CD Hancock, 'Wilson, Daniel' in DEB, ii, 1205.

The evidence for later London Evangelical clerical growth is clear. The survey carried out for the editor of *The Times* in 1844 revealed that of the ninety-four principal clergy of London, forty-six were listed as Evangelicals, twenty-five as High Churchmen and twenty-three as moderates.¹¹ Again, in 1856, the *Christian Observer* noted: 'we find that within the last decade many of the largest and most important parishes have been placed under the parochial care of a better and abler evangelical clergy.' St. Paul's Cathedral, too, was becoming 'a radiating point for evangelical truth throughout the city.'¹² Lewis notes: 'Between 1846 and January 1856.....The three canonries of St Paul's Cathedral that the Crown controlled were given to leading Evangelical clergy in the period, giving them an important say in the appointment of other London clergy.'¹³

This later growth clearly had its roots in the state of Evangelicalism in the Metropolis in the 1820s and 1830s. Lewis does indeed assert: 'it was not until the 1830s that Anglican Evangelical clergy really began to make their presence felt in the city' and 'Only after 1835, ... did Evangelical

¹¹ See 'The principal Clergy of London', Bodleian Library, MS. Add. C. 290.

¹² Cited by Lewis, op. cit., 232.

¹³ Ibid., 328 f.n.

clergy become a significant force in London,'¹⁴ but Evangelicalism in the Metropolis was certainly growing numerically and in influence before 1835.

Dominance must not, of course, be confused with popularity. Lecky himself later conceded that he had exaggerated the number of Evangelical clergy¹⁵ and amended his statement, as noted by Charles Smyth, ('The Evangelical Movement in Perspective' ¹⁶ so that it now read 'by the close of the century [18th], the Evangelical party, though still a minority, had become a large and important section of the English Church ... the Evangelical movement had become the almost undisputed centre of religious activity in England, and continued to be so until the rise of the Tractarian movement of 1833.' Neill, whilst not embracing the idea of dominance, nevertheless warns that the power and significance of the Evangelicals in the Church of England should not be overlooked.¹⁷ Even HP Liddon acknowledged: 'The deepest and most fervid religion in England during the first three decades of this century was that of the Evangelicals.'¹⁸ and Geoffrey Faber remarked that Newman could still call the party 'by far the most important of the three which he was trying

¹⁴ Lewis, op. cit., 4, 5.

¹⁵ Lecky, *History of England in the Nineteenth Century* (1879).

¹⁶ *Cambridge Historical Journal*, vii, (1943), 165.

¹⁷ See Neill, op. cit., 190.

¹⁸ HP Liddon, *The Life of Dr. Pusey*, (1882), i, 255.

to describe for the information of his French readers.'¹⁹ Nevertheless, Mark Pattison averred 'In 1833 Evangelicalism was already effete'.²⁰ However, WJ Conybeare, in 1853, seems nearer the truth in stating: 'We deny, then, that the old Evangelical party is effete, while it still brings forth children so worthy of their spiritual ancestry. Yet at the same time we must confess that its strength and vigour is relatively if not positively diminished, and that its hold upon the public is less than it was in the last generation.'²¹

That there was a decline in the influence of Evangelicalism later in the 19th century is indisputable; but we note Overton's remark: 'I feel bound in common justice to add that I can find no traces of this degeneracy in the lives of its leaders.'²² Perhaps the situation has been best summed up: 'The early years of the nineteenth century were years of reviving life in the Church of England, and for this reviving life the Evangelicals, both directly by their own activities and indirectly by the example they set to other schools of thought, were in the main responsible.'²³ This impact on

¹⁹ *Oxford Apostles* (Harmondsworth, 1954), 83.

²⁰ M Pattison, *Essays*, (1889), ii, 269. Similarly, Dean Church in *The Oxford Movement* (1891).

²¹ Conybeare, 'Church Parties' in *Edinburgh Review* (Oct.1853), 283.

²² Overton, *The English Church in the Nineteenth Century*, 99.

²³ Elliott-Binns, *The Evangelical Movement in Church*, (1928), 46.

the nation was acknowledged by GM Young and WD Hancock.²⁴

EA Knox perceptively comments: 'It was an age [1800-1830] of marked and rapid progress up to 1815 ... Probably it is the extraordinary progress made during those thirty years that has led to the popular belief that in 1830 Evangelicalism was a spent force'. Knox acknowledges that this rate of progress was not maintained after 1836 but makes the important point that 'a check in rapid progress is very different from stagnation'. Progress, albeit more slowly, was still being made after 1836.²⁵

We conclude that while the Evangelical clergy were never more than a minority within the Church,²⁶ Evangelicalism's relatively powerful influence continued to grow, even if at a decreasing rate, until at least 1837. As far as London is concerned, Gladstone was right in what he asserted about the number of Evangelical incumbents but fails to give sufficient weight both to the number of Evangelical ministers in proprietary chapels, daughter chapels and lectureships, as well as to the increasing numerical strength, vitality and influence, of the Evangelical laity. Whilst Evangelical clergy may not have become 'a significant force

²⁴ See *English Historical Documents* (1956), xii, 33, cited by Neill, op. cit., 243.

²⁵ See AE Knox, *The Oxford Movement* (1933), 61.

²⁶ See Neill, op. cit., 194.

in London' until after 1835, there is no doubt that the London Evangelical laity, especially under the leadership of Wilberforce, exercised considerable power and influence well before the nineteenth century.

The Impact of Evangelicalism on London

GM Young remarked of Evangelicals that 'By about 1830 their work was done, they had driven the grosser kinds of cruelty, extravagance, and profligacy underground'.¹ But the fact remains that much deprivation persisted into the Victorian era. For example, in East London 30 per cent of the population still lived in poverty, and even in mid-Victorian London whole blocks and narrow streets were made over to a 'more or less lawless underworld which could not or would not "respectably" earn its own living'²

Although the Victorian gentleman and his family may have been more religious in his habits and sober in his tone of thought than in the 18th century, the 1851 Census of Religious Worship revealed that under 20 per cent of Londoners went to a morning service, and only 13 per cent to an evening one. There was, of course, wide variation ranging from 39 per

¹ GM Young, *Portrait of an Age* (Oxford, 1966), 4.

² See G Best, *Mid-Victorian Britain* (1971), 294.

cent in Hampstead to 9 per cent in Shoreditch. However, whilst these figures may seem low, church attendance does not necessarily reflect a conscious rejection of Christian teaching. Further, some working-class non-attendance may well be due to an unwillingness of the poor to go to churches dominated by middle-class worshippers.³ Even so, the state of London Anglican Evangelicalism cannot be extrapolated from these figures.

Attitudes to Evangelicals in London certainly changed from those of hostility and ridicule to acceptance and respect. Whereas Gladstone, in 1829, spoke explicitly of 'to how prevailing an extent the Evangelical clergy were still a despised and a proscribed body in the view of the orthodox "public opinion" of their day' and asserted: 'this was no merely clerical proscription. The laity, or the world in general, spoke and acted in the same spirit, so far as, with regard to religion, they spoke or acted at all,'⁴ yet Alexander Haldane in 1853 in rebuking his fellow Evangelicals: 'Thirty years before [around the 1820s], evangelicalism had been persecuted and evil spoken of; but it had now become fashionable. It was no longer a mere stigma of reproach, as it had been to Romaine, and

³ See Inwood, *A History of London* (1998), 678, 679.

⁴Gladstone, *op. cit.*, 12.

Venn, and Newton, and Cecil, and even to Charles Simeon in his earlier years.’⁵

How is this change of attitude, not least in London, to be explained? First, as we have seen, Evangelical theology was now perceived to be more moderate and thus less offensive to non-Evangelicals. Second, the practical interest of Evangelicals in social concerns and humanitarian activity, even if their motivation was sometimes deemed suspect, was seen to be genuine. Third, Evangelical loyalty to the Established Church was now accepted with less question than formerly. Fourth, the intellectual abilities of many Evangelical clergy were now being increasingly recognised. Fifth, many households of the aristocracy and gentry had taken on Evangelical values and practices, often through the influence of converted wives. Sixth, the anti-Jacobin stance of Evangelicalism generally accorded well with much influential opinion.

Influence is not synonymous with fashionableness. Evangelicals were never a majority in the Church of England but they did probably become the most influential school within it. S Neill believed this was from 1815-c.1870; but, as far as London was concerned, it achieved its maximum

⁵ *Record* (29 December 1853), cited by Lewis, op. cit., 16.

influence after 1835. ⁶ We note that Henry Blunt (1794-1843), who was appointed Rector of Holy Trinity, Sloane Street, in 1832 (successfully introducing Bible classes in the parish after initial opposition) and of Streatham in 1835, 'drew around him what was perhaps the most influential congregation in London.' ⁷ Notable, too, was Charles Bradley (1788-1871), a most attractive and forceful preacher (v. St James, Clapham 1829-53), whose sermons were widely read and preached.⁸ Certainly Evangelical churches were increasing in number and prominence. In the 1850s some London Evangelical incumbents, for example Henry Montagu Villiers and Robert Bickersteth, were being elevated to the episcopate.

The Calibre of London Evangelical Clergy

Evangelicalism, relative to its numerical strength, produced its fair share of scholars as the new century began. Those touched by the revival were not encouraged towards ignorance or bigotry. By contrast, 'it proved effective in spreading a thirst for knowledge.'⁹ The view, of Evangelicals,

⁶ See op. cit., 234, citing Newman's *Apologia pro Vita Sua* and RCK Ensor.

⁷ Balleine, op. cit., 197.

⁸ See Knox, op. cit., 70.

⁹ See Bebbington, 'Revival and Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century England' in EL Blumhofer and R Balmer (eds.), *Modern Christian Revivals* (Chicago, 1993), 30.

that 'their ideas remained, what they always had been, intellectually beyond the pale.'¹⁰ is unduly prejudiced. The leaders were, self-evidently, highly intelligent men and the charge of illiteracy or anti-intellectualism levelled against the early Anglican Evangelicals arises either from ignorance or prejudice. We note that HM Larnier was able to speak of 'The scholarly William Romaine'¹¹ and Richard Cecil was widely acknowledged as a refined and learned man. Soon the scholarship of men like William Dealtry, Francis Perry (1807-1891) and Thomas Dale (1797-1870) would receive recognition.

However, the main reason why 'Few books of merit have been produced by the Evangelicals' of our period¹² and Evangelicals 'produced no theological work of really first-rate calibre'¹³ is not to be found in any supposed intellectual deficiency or despising of true learning. We should note, first, the number of potential Evangelical writers, relative to other 'traditions', was necessarily at first very small. Second, all Evangelicals saw their prime calling to be ministers of the Gospel rather than academics. They felt deeply that this task was being largely neglected by the Church. Thomas Scott's intellectual ability and writings had indeed

¹⁰ G Kitson-Clark, *The Making of Victorian England* (1963), 23.

¹¹ Larnier, op. cit., 216.

¹² See Larnier, 'Evangelicals' in DECH, 219.

¹³ MW Patterson, op. cit., 396.

been recognised but, in his time, Evangelicals had not been encouraged by cathedral preferment and so had not been set free from parochial cares for theological writing.¹⁴

6 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Although the term 'Methodist' was often applied to Evangelicalism, it is to be distinguished from 'Wesleyanism' or Wesleyan Methodism. There was, indeed, some overlap and linkage but the two movements were parallel and are to be differentiated.

Whilst the movement (1735-1836), later called Evangelicalism, had its own distinctives, it was not novel in every respect. Doctrinal orthodoxy still existed in places and one or more of Evangelicalism's primary characteristics – biblicism, crucicentrism, conversionism and activism - were doubtless evident even in some contemporary London churches. What was distinctive was the primary emphasis given to all four of these characteristics, albeit in varying degrees.

¹⁴ See Conybeare, *op. cit.*, 283, who specifically mentions TW Horne (1780-1862), c. Christ Church, Newgate St. (1819-25), asst. min. Welbeck Chapel (1825-33) and r. St. Nicholas, Lombard Street (1833 ff).

Evangelicalism did not immediately make a dramatic impact on London religion, at least not in its effect on the ecclesiastical establishment. Numbers were relatively small and early growth was slow. Hostility to the movement soon developed, especially from 1739 from the London clergy, and continued in one form or another throughout the period. 'Methodism' and 'enthusiasm' were among the favourite pejoratives used.

Our study has shown that the appointment of John Newton to his London benefice in 1779 was a defining event for London Evangelicalism, notably through his personality, writings, spiritual guidance and preaching.

The pre-1780 phase, after the initial work of the Wesleys and Whitefield, was dominated by the later ministry of Whitefield, the work of Lady Huntingdon and William Romaine. There were, however, others who exercised significant ministries in non-parochial appointments. It was precisely the difficulty Evangelicals experienced in gaining positions of influence which was a major obstacle to Evangelical growth.

The post-1780 phase, until his death in 1807, was powerfully influenced by the multi-faceted ministry and leadership of Newton. He, with Thomas Scott and Josiah Pratt, were largely instrumental in forming the Eclectic Society, which gave fresh impetus to Evangelical growth in London.

The appointment and ministry of John Venn to Clapham (1792-1813), together with the formation of the Clapham group, mainly comprising influential laymen under the effective leadership of William Wilberforce, proved to be another decisive and pivotal point in London Evangelicalism, greatly contributing to increased growth, maturity and influence. Hannah More and Charles Simeon, although not resident in London, also had strong links and influence with the Clapham group.

Effective and positive impulses were provided by Evangelical literature, especially the tracts of More, her *Manners of the Great* (1788), her *Estimate of the Religion* (1791) and Wilberforce's *Practical View* (1797).

Soon major societies were formed, notably the RTS, BFBS and CMS (all based in London), and these, with numerous other philanthropic and religious societies which followed apace, spawned many and varied Evangelical networks. From this point London Evangelicalism became more acceptable and influential, without ever becoming numerically dominant.

The Christian Observer, under the editorship of Zachary Macaulay 1802-1816 and reflecting the humanitarian and inclusive Evangelicalism of the Clapham group, had been the leading Evangelical publication. However, with the continuing growth of Evangelicalism, differences of emphasis began to be more marked and obtrusive, leading to tension and conflict. Even the originally moderate *Record* (established in 1828), under the influence of Alexander Haldane from 1830, now adopted a much more bullish approach. A significant section of Evangelicals, later dubbed 'Recordites', emerged. It was not only the topics of predestinarianism and millenarianism which were contentious. Disputes arose over the social and humanitarian dimensions of the gospel. A hardening edge of Evangelicalism became more apparent as the Oxford Movement gained impetus.

Meanwhile, as support for CMS continued to flourish and the impulses for home mission grew, leading to the formation of the interdenominational London City Mission in 1835 and Anglican CPAS in 1836, the bonds of Evangelical fellowship in London began to be strengthened. All this London Evangelical life and activity was facilitated, and Evangelical networking further promoted, by the annual Islington Conferences and the May Meetings.

The rise and development of Evangelicalism in London in the 18th and 19th centuries cannot be attributed to any single cause. In its various phases different factors may be singled out as being particularly important. Undoubtedly patronage played a significant part. Whilst the aristocrat Lady Huntingdon and the bluestocking Hannah More were prominent Evangelicals, women generally played an increasing role through their active work in support of Evangelical societies and evangelical witness in countless homes.

The fact that the members of the Clapham Sect, albeit all distinguished persons, were lay men or women (apart from John Venn) would certainly have encouraged the laity generally to see that they had a role to play in Evangelical activity. This indeed happened in the founding or development

of major societies, not least in the cases of Coates (CMS) and Sandoz (CPAS). It is quite wrong to suppose that no members of the laity (men or women) held a leadership position of the first rank in the Evangelical Movement. The leadership of Wilberforce was outstanding and the influence of More in London highly significant.

In regard to the clergy, it has become apparent that a whole range of abilities and social backgrounds contributed to the progress of the movement. The preaching of Romaine and, later, Cunningham, the scholarship and teaching ability of Scott, the leadership and pastoral ministry of Newton, the cultured outlook of Cecil, the administrative skills of Pratt, the wisdom and piety of Bickersteth, the vision of the Wilsons (Sr. and Jr.), to mention only a few, all conduced to the development, continuance and growth of Evangelicalism in London.

The first century of development of London Evangelicalism was certainly one of growth. That growth was at first slow and uneven, and often varied in the forms it took and emphases it manifested. At each stage different personalities came to the fore.

Central to our study has been the towering figure of John Newton in London. He himself had been powerfully influenced by personal contact with Whitefield prior to his Woolnoth ministry. His *Narrative* of 1764 had been read by Lord Dartmouth in MS form in 1763. Newton then exercised a highly effective London ministry, during which he had significant impact on the Christian work and witness of people like Scott, Cecil, More and Wilberforce. After his death in 1807, the continuing influence of his example, teaching and letters was evident in the London ministry of Wilson (Sr). His *Works* (6 vols) were published in 1808 and widely read. Others, undoubtedly, played vital parts in the development of London Anglican Evangelicalism. But, certainly in London, the leadership and contribution of John Newton in the period under review was unsurpassed. Truly, in London Evangelicalism, he was *primus inter pares* in life and remained an influential, iconic figure of patriarchal stature for many years.

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